Archivist interview transcripts

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So, about the aliens…

[sys: *Generating transcript…*] [sys: *Removing self censorship…*] [sys: *Removing non essentials…*] [July/9/2025] [63M views in the first hour]

[plinky plonky royalty-free stock music plays]

Archivist 1: So… the aliens finally showed up. And the U.S. reaction was exactly what you'd expect: They saw something big coming through space and immediately went: "*Yup, better nuke it.*"

Four ships, each the size of a mountain range — **20 kilometers long –** easing into Earth's orbit like it was no big deal.

[stock footage of a traffic jam, but with giant spaceship silhouettes pasted in]

[ominous classical music plays]

And of course, the world freaks out. Missiles fly. Jets scramble. Billions of taxpayer dollars go *fwoosh* into the atmosphere.

[plinky plonky royalty-free stock music plays]

And then? Absolutely nothing.

The ships didn't even flinch. It was like throwing Tic Tacs at a freight train.

[sad trombone over grainy missile test footage]

So, yeah. Humanity's "welcome gift" was a rocket propelled slap that accomplished *literally zero.*

And then, just when everyone was waiting for the counter-strike that would end civilization, the aliens casually picked up the phone and called the *NORAD's crisis hotline*.

"Hello, Earth. First of all, please don't do that again. Also, we'll be demonstrating an orbital strike in the Nevada desert shortly. Nothing personal, just… you know, for the vibes."

[footage of desert stock video with meme explosions overlayed]

Forty-eight hours later – boom. Nevada glassified. A chunk of desert turned into the galaxy's shiniest dinner plate.

So the aliens basically said: "We'll nuke your desert to make a point. Don't panic."

And of course, everyone panicked harder.

The U.S. went DEFCON Angry Bald Eagle, Russia popped champagne, China tried to slide into alien DMs, and the UN held a group therapy session. Meanwhile, the rest of the world stocked up on toilet paper again.

By hour six, fighter jets are scrambling for no reason, missiles are armed, and every news channel is screaming, "*Is this World War III?*" Spoiler: no, because World War III requires the other side to actually notice you exist. The Veythrans didn't flinch.

Day two, the CIA is already trying to reverse-engineer blurry satellite footage of the strike, hoping it'll turn into a superweapon if they stare hard enough. The Pentagon officially calls it a "measured response." Translation: "*We don't know what the hell to do*."

Seventy-two hours later, humanity's gone through denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally… memes. Because nothing says resilience like turning your invaders into anime mascots before the ash has even cooled.

Then they videocalled NATO and the EU with the real kicker:

"So, small problem. We don't actually have enough fuel to go home. Also, if our ships are attacked again, there's a nonzero chance the power cores destabilize and vaporize your planet. So, please, keep the missiles to yourselves, yes?"

[Comic Sans caption over stock explosion: "PLANET HAS CRASHED"]

And then came the real demand. Not New York. Not London. Not Beijing.

"We require territory. Italy. Malta. And we expect the CIA to notarize this arrangement immediately."

Vaelora: Well… it wasn't that simple and the antimatter explosion wouldn't look like that –

Archivist 1: So yeah. That's how first contact went down. Not *Independence Day.* Not *Close Encounters.* No heroic speeches. Just: four planet-killers in orbit, a doomsday core warning and the galaxy's most aggressive real estate contract.

[plinky plonky stock music fades out]

Anyway. That was the big hello. And now you're probably asking: who am *I* to be telling you all this? Some *professor*? A *journalist*? A *politician*?

Nope. I'm a guy on YouTube. I make videos with funny edits and bad stock footage.

Which brings us to my guest. Yes, guest. Because for reasons that remain utterly unclear, the first alien overlord on Earth decided to sit down and explain things to… me. Not the BBC. Not CNN. Not the New York Times. Just… *me.*

Ladies and gentlemen, meet Vaelora Kethryn – a representative of the Veythran people. She could've spoken to any head of state. She could've delivered speeches in marble halls. Instead, she's virtually here on my discount podcast setup, sharing the mic with a guy whose last video was about a ship grounding.

So, if you are wondering why history sounds like a meme right now, don't look at me.

Blame her.

[cut to fake studio with badly animated 2D avatars]

Archivist 1: Oh man, *I have so many questions!*

Vaelora: *Hi!*

Archivist 1: ...Right. Uh. That's it? "Hi"? You've parked four city-sized ships in orbit, glassed Nevada, terrified every government on the planet, and your opening line is just – "Hi."

Vaelora: *Hi.*

Archivist 1: [sighs] Okay, this is fine. Totally fine. History's first interstellar interview and I've basically been paired with Dora the Explorer. Cool.

Vaelora: That is… not entirely inaccurate. Terraformer-class vessels are also exploratory craft. So I guess I am Vaelora the e Explorer.

Archivist 1: Did you just -did the first alien envoy to Earth really just "yes, and" my Dora joke? *Unbelievable*. Humanity's greatest moment and I'm talking to space Dora. Fine. Great. Love it here.

Alright then, *Explorer.* Riddle me this: why Earth? You've got the entire galaxy out there, right? Infinite stars, endless planets, probably a few Airbnbs in Andromeda. So why here? Why us?

Vaelora: Because our readings told us that this place was very likely to be habitable. Worst case scenario it could have been in rough shape, best case scenario it could have been a lush green planet full of exotic life forms.

Archivist 1: Right. Okay, so the alien version of Zillow told you this rock might be worth checking out. Fair enough. But let's be honest – you didn't just land and say, "Cool planet, let's hang out." No, you had your big Nevada fireworks show, scared the pants off everyone, and then made your big demand: Territory.

And not New York, not Washington, not Tokyo. You went with… *Italy. And Malta.*

Why? Why those two? You could've taken literally anywhere. Half the world would've handed you beachfront property for free if it meant not being turned into cosmic lasagna. But instead, you went straight for pasta land and glorified limestone rock with tourists.

I mean, don't get me wrong – beautiful places, love the food, 10/10 pizza. But still. Why there?

Vaelora: Because it's nice. But also, we landed on Malta first, tested what we could do on such a small piece of land with our equipment. Soon we went net zero, except for methalox propulsion, we will consume planet-changing amounts of methalox, so we have to compensate for that. We also massively increased energy availability, lowering costs. Our machinery, especially resource gathering worms, gave us the chance to produce stuff locally without the need to import raw materials. We built Malta's own intranet. We then did the same, but on a much larger scale to Italy, which is now a manufacturing powerhouse, but still with balanced carbon emissions. Also Italy is a popular tourist attraction, which means that if people are going to see it they are also going to see part of what we are doing there, which is amazing.

We really must fix your demented industrialization to protect places like Italy. Also it seems you are on the brink of total war and about to spawn a cyber-demon. We better act fast.

Archivist 1: Okay, makes sense. I mean, look, don't get me wrong – net zero emissions, shiny new infrastructure, free upgrades to the plumbing… sounds amazing. But it also sounds like you're saying, "Yeah, humans, you've been doing capitalism wrong for about two hundred years, so we're just gonna fix that now. Please enjoy your involuntary trial period of Alien Socialism."

Vaelora: Like Xi would put it: socialism with Veythran characteristics.

Archivist 1: Oh my god. She *knows the memes.* Humanity has been invaded by a civilization that quotes Chinese leaders ironically. That's it. Pack it up, folks, we're done.

Alright, fine. You win. Italy's your test kitchen, Malta's your tutorial island, and apparently we're all just beta testers for Alien Steam Early Access.

But here's the real thing I can't wrap my head around – *how*.

How did you even get here? We're talking about **interstellar space**. The distances are insane. The fuel requirements are off the charts. You can't just slap some rockets together and cruise in from Alpha Centauri, or wherever.

So what's the deal? Did you guys invent some faster-than-light drive? Wormholes? Or is your star about to blow up and you all just panic migrated here? Because if this is some cosmic "our sun's about to die so we're moving in" situation, I feel like that's something Earth deserves to know up front.

Vaelora: "Earth deserves to know" huh? I'm not so sure about that. But here we go: In ancient times our Empire was basically a fortress. We got attacked by outsiders that were eerily similar to humans. The attacks were not so nice. Eventually we got tired of those and killed every outsider. It was a genocidal campaign that went on for thirty years. We were able to accomplish that in so little time thanks to our superior technology. Then we were left alone, looking at the stars and thinking: "If there is even the slightest chance that, out there, there could be new aggressive outsiders with better tech, our species is doomed." Also, space is dangerous, you know… asteroids, solar flares, gamma ray bursts. So we got to work for... a few thousand years. We covered a significant portion of our star with exotic converters disguised as a natural celestial object, used that energy to charge

up our antimatter cores, then put those into our ships and traveled for a few centuries towards Earth, while sleeping with our metabolism slowed down and body temperature lowered, just to improve our tech and be safe. We also worked on… a lot of space infrastructure.

Archivist 1: Okay, hang on... Back home, you weren't exactly jetting around the galaxy. You had one world, one Empire, giant wall around the sandbox, "nobody gets in, nobody gets out." And then some unlucky outsiders decided to poke the hive.

And your response wasn't: "Oh no, diplomacy, treaties, maybe a sternly worded email."

No. Your response was: "Cool, time to genocide the neighbors."

And you *won.* Wiped them out. But then instead of throwing a victory party and going back to fortress world, you look up at the stars and go: "Wait. What if there's more of them? What if they're worse? What if they're coming right now?"

That's when the paranoia kicked in, right?

That's when you went, "Okay, pack your stuff, strap rockets to the house, we're not waiting around to get rolled again."

So you didn't do it because you had to. Not because your star was dying or your planet was toast. But because standing still felt like waiting to die.

Which makes me wonder: how much of what you're doing here is really about "fixing Earth"… and how much of it is just your species' panic attack projected onto the rest of the galaxy?

Vaelora: It's not exactly a panic attack, it's just that we can think long term. Unlike humans, we behave more like a beehive, an ant colony. We are not a bunch of crazy individuals constantly infighting to the point that everything goes regularly to shit real quick. For us it's just survival.

Archivist 1: Right. So basically: you're space ants with doomsday ships. Fantastic. Nothing terrifying about that at all.

Hear that, folks? Humanity's about to be annexed by the world's most punctual bug hive. Can't wait for mandatory worker uniforms and three-hour lectures on "synergy."

Alright, but while I've got you here, I've gotta ask: what's up with the *eyes*?

Every photo, every broadcast, every person who's seen you up close – they all mention it: the bright purple eyes. Looks like you've got permanent cosplay contacts installed. Is that a natural thing? Or are you just flexing on us with cool alien contact lenses?

Vaelora: They are just natural purple irises. Rarely even humans have them. We relied on this and other traits to distinguish us from outsiders during the big genocide. Traits like pale skin and no hair, aside from eyelashes and eyebrows.

Archivist 1: So wait. You're telling me your eye color is basically a built-in IFF tag? Like a biological passport? Purple = safe, not purple = instant "get out of the gene pull"?

And people thought humans were petty because we bullied redheads in school. These guys ran an entire genocide off of Pantone swatches.

You know what that means, right? At some point in the future, some dude on Etsy is going to start selling fake purple contact lenses and black-market razors just to cosplay as you and try sneaking into your protectorates.

Vaelora: During the genocide we had primitive technology and had to make quick decisions. Now we have better methods.

Archivist 1: Oh, awesome. "*Better methods.*" That's always the phrase you want to hear right after someone casually mentions a genocide.

Do you hear yourselves? Purple eyes, pale skin, no hair, sort the population based on who matches the look and who doesn't… You guys are basically space Nazis. With dreadnoughts.

So tell me, Vaelora the Explorer, when you say "*better methods*," do you mean "less murder-y"? Or just "more efficient at sorting who gets to live under your shiny alien utopia"?

Vaelora: Oh wow, "utopia". Thanks, but not everybody is always happy all the time in our society. Anyway, we didn't gaslit our butt hurt and broke population into hating minorities to make a cruel and fiery come back, justified by a made up sense of superiority. No no no. The outsiders provoked us, attacked us, raped our women and… We had to defend ourselves. Also we noticed real and significant differences in behavior between us and the others. They were more like humans. We were very different. Our better methods to tell the difference between us and you, are bio-metric and genetic scanners. High tech stuff like that. We also are now trying to assimilate, not kill.

Archivist 1: Okay, so… Nazis = bad because they *made up* reasons to kill minorities. You = good because your genocide was… "justified self-defense."

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the part of the video where the alien casually drops the "*we had to*" defense for extermination and expects me not to choke on my coffee.

And now, instead of eyeballing people and checking who's purple enough, you've got sci-fi TSA scanners that can tell instantly whether someone's in or out of the club.

Congrats. That's not less terrifying – that's just German engineering on steroids.

Vaelora: That's not discrimination, it's survival.

Archivist 1: Welp. There it is. The most chilling sentence ever said in an interview. And you know what that means, folks…

Ad time.

[upbeat ukulele stock music fades in]

So – want to watch the latest stream about the alien invasion, but it's geo-locked? Tired of your government blocking "the Nevada explosion" footage because it's "too scary for the public"? Well, have no fear, because NebulaVPN has your back.

With NebulaVPN you can:

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Secure your connection, so even if the Veythran start scanning your WiFi packets, they'll just see "guy watching cooking videos" instead of "guy panic-reading alien invasion forums at 3am."

And best of all, NebulaVPN has a special offer: use code **ARCHIVIST1** at checkout for *three free months* of pretending you live in a county that isn't currently being annexed.

[music cuts abruptly]

How to Annex a Country in 48 Hours (But First, History Class)

Archivist 1: [voice-over on black background] Most aspects of the Veythrans maybe are horror for us, but for them they are homeostasis. Different wiring, different morality. *Let's dig deeper.*

Archivist 1: [back to fake studio. sips coffee] Anyway. Where were we? Oh right – Nazis.

Vaelora: Dude, we are not Nazis. You are ignoring motivational structure here. C'mon.

Archivist 1: Sure. Anyway, before we get into how Italy basically rage-quit sovereignty, let's roll back a bit. Because if you really want to understand what's happening now, you've got to know where these guys came from.

[cue grainy stock footage of caves, castles, bees, and a knockoff Discovery Channel logo badly edited over it]

Archivist 1: Vaelora, let's talk about your people. What made you all… you know… this?

Vaelora: During an ice age a bunch of monkeys got stuck in a peninsula, with too much ice at the northern mountain range that connected it to the rest of the continent. They evolved into our ancestors-

Archivist 1:Aha! A peninsula, like Italy, so you went there to feel at home-

Vaelora: [smirking] Shut the fuck up. Anyway, so… our ancestors organized themselves into hunter gatherer tribes, those were crazy times, lots of infighting among ourselves for territory and resources. At some point one of the tribes developed a matriarchal society. It happened because while men were always out hunting and fighting, some women got good with herbs and at tinkering with stuff. They were like shamans, but without the spiritual elements. We are naturally not prone to faith and superstition, very matter-of-fact, different brain wiring. And even the dumbest of us had twice the cognitive capability of average humans. Those women were the proto-matriarchs. And things really went well for them because our plants were crazy… some of them, if correctly used, had decent healing properties, others were extremely poisonous and often some plants looked very similar to one another. So if you had the skills you could do very useful stuff.

It really got good for them when they discovered natural drugs, hallucinogens and aphrodisiacs.

They used that stuff to control and manipulate men, and then their entire society. Later on they started studying not just plants and seduction, but everything, with a scientific approach. Soon they were figuring out how to improve arrows, bows, spears. All sort of weapons and tools used my men and by themselves.

Thanks to their work, their tribe became the most powerful, it conquered others, started using farming and herding, picked up a nice spot near a river and built our first city.

They started eugenics programs and gave their society shape and order. Matriarchs even started following men into battle against increasingly stronger tribes and lesser city states,

in order to study war and improve tactics and strategy. At that point matriarchs became a technocratic elite.

This went on for quite some time until the whole peninsula was free from ice at the north, so they started expanding in that direction, despite the massive mountain range.

At that point the basics of the Veythran hierarchy were fleshed out: we had commoners, short and tame servants; entertainers, the tall and strong wives of soldiers that were not lucky enough to marry a matriarch; and then, of course you had the matriarchal technocratic elite, taller and stronger than anybody else.

Kids were trained and sorted for roles, they went through a eugenic selection process from a very young age, in designated facilities, and once they got out of those they were sent not to their own families, but to families picked by the elite. No one knew who were their actual kids anymore. Somehow that developed a strong sense of community among our people.

The elite nuclear family consisted of either a matriarch or an entertainer, a soldier, the younglings out of training, and two servants one male, one female, that helped around the house, like other commoners, but on top of that, the two were courtesans for both the male and the female in charge.

Years of selective breeding and the sexual preferences of the elites shaped commoners into what they are now.

Once the ice was mostly gone and our ancestors really started to push north we met the outsiders, typically shorter than one of our soldiers, with darker skin, lots of hair, brown eyes. They were… disturbing, and performed blood rituals for imaginary figures of authority they made up.

We fought them away, matriarchs did all sorts of shenanigans to make sure that Veythran soldiers did not impregnate outsiders, to keep our race pure and coherent [Archivist 1's eyebrows rise]. A hybrid with their attitude and our cognitive capabilities was something we were extremely afraid of. To avoid that we even created the buggery division, male commoners that looked like women were sent to battle zones, but stayed at the rear, waiting to serve soldiers on rotation [Archivist 1's eyebrows rise unnaturally]. Matriarchs even figured out how to perform vasectomies safely on some soldiers to avoid cross breeding, and developed early forms of condoms.

In the end we remained pure Veythrans and gave shape to our Empire, called the Axis [Archivist 1's eyebrows rise even more], due to its shape. We stopped expanding and focused on improving infrastructure to better manage the massive territory we already had. We built three layers of fortifications. Behind the last layer of fortifications we kept our most advanced technology hidden. And for a few centuries there was peace.

But then, the outsiders attacked us with a massive army of 50000 men from the west. They breached our first layer of defenses. We managed to defeat them, but it was a mess. They raped a lot of our women, so matriarchs scrambled to do abortions. They infected us with new diseases. One was similar to smallpox. Matriarchs scrambled again to try

inoculation, and after hard work, figured out vaccines, just in time. They were not exactly vaccines, because they got ‘em from another animal, but same principle.

After a while they attacked again. 150000 men from the east, 60000 from the west, 20000 from the south sea. We kicked their ass with minimal losses.

The third time they didn’t even stop to loot and rape, they were laser focused on going through our layers of fortifications one after the other. When they stood in front of the last wall, the Head Matriarch decided to unveil our secret tech and it was the last thing the outsiders ever saw.

Imagine the Imperial Roman army trying to fight the Wehrmacht [Archivist 1’s eyebrows start spinning for a while], that’s how it went. And right there and then is when the genocidal campaign started. We nuked, we gassed, we ran experiments, we firebombed [Archivist 1’s eyebrows jump up out of frame for a moment]. Until the last outsider was gone. Then we got good at tech. How the different castes worked change a bit. And here we are.

Archivist 1: Yeah, cool. So you are not Nazis. You are femboy-loving Nazis.

Vaelora: ughhh…

Archivist 1: Let’s rewind a bit though, because there’s a *lot* to unpack here.

[waves hands dramatically]

First off: Ice Age monkeys stuck on a peninsula? That’s your origin myth? That’s not even sci-fi, that’s just “we couldn’t climb over the Alps so we invented genocide.”

And then you had your proto-matriarchs cooking up potions like it’s an PRG skill tree – healing plants, poison plants, horny plants. Basically the alien version of Skyrim alchemy. “Combine two mushrooms, boom, you’ve invented state power.”

Oh, and the eugenics bit – very cool, very normal. Sorting kids at a young age, sending them off to other families, nobody knows who their parents are… Congratulations, you invented foster care, but made it fascist.

And entertainers? Really? Out of all the rigid caste slots you could’ve made, you left one open for clowns. Like, “Yes, we will have soldiers, matriarchs, and also Jerry Seinfeld with purple eyes.”

And don’t think I missed the part about “buggery divisions.” You guys literally militarized the twink pipeline. I mean...honestly, respect, but also: what the fuck?

[leans closer, deadpan]

Imagine marching into battle, dodging arrows, and in the backlines there’s a whole squad called “Team Femboy,” just waiting for rotation. No wonder your society held together – you tuned war into anime.

Vaelora: Hehe, we are different… by the way the whole foster care situation was actually worse than you might think, only the matriarchs had the last say on who could and who could not have children. And the “femboy” thing degenerated so much that now all our commoners look female. Go on… keep roasting.

Archivist 1: Oh my god. She really just said, “Yes, actually, our foster care system is more dystopian than you imagined, thanks for asking.”

And the “all commoners look female” bit? That’s not eugenics, that’s just speedrunning androgyny. You basically turned your entire working class into default character sliders.

And look, I don’t want to kink shame, but you’ve basically admitted your society industrialized gender-bending while also industrializing genocide. You’re like if Tumblr and the Third Reich had a baby, and then made it hairless with purple eyes.

Vaelora: Now that you make me think about it, our medium machine gun at the start of the genocide looked a lot like an MG42…

Archivist 1: [leans back, mock shocked] Oh great, now we’re doing historical cosplay, *genocide edition*. You don’t just casually drop “yeah, our MG42s were fire, anyway-” like you’re reminiscing about your first concert.

Vaelora: It’s called honesty. *We don’t sugarcoat*. If a weapon works, we remember it.

Archivist 1: Yeah, well, humanity remembers it too – as the “Hitler’s buzzsaw” that made every Allied grunt soil themselves. So congrats, you’ve basically confirmed your Empire not only binge-watched human atrocities but also took notes for the highlight reel.

Vaelora: We improved them. Reliability first, logistics simplified. And we don’t have to worry about Geneva.

Archivist 1: [snorts] Oh right, no Geneva Convention – just the “Vaelora Convention”: Rule one, look like a girl. Rule two, obey the matriarchs. Rule three, if in doubt, crank the genocide dial to eleven.

Vaelora: [smirks] At least we don’t waste paper writing rules we immediately break.

Archivist 1: Touché. But still, I can’t shake the image of some purple-eyed conscript hip-firing an MG42 knockoff while yelling about “team femboy” tactics. That’s not an Empire. That’s a cursed forum thread.

Vaelora: There is a lot more to our military doctrine beyond making sure our soldiers don’t make babies with the wrong kind…

Archivist 1: [mock serious] Speaking of “wrong kind”, let’s talk Italy –

Vaelora: Oh no, you didn’t…

Archivist 1: Just kidding guys, *it was all a joke*… Anyway. Yeah, I know you invaded us, purple-eyed space Nazis with anime filters. What’s the actual plan there? Pizza occupation zones? Vatican turned into your personal cosplay cathedral?

Vaelora: We tested our tech there, made it a manufacturing powerhouse, with minimal raw material imports, turned it into an energy exporter… yadda yadda yadda. When it comes to the people, we want to assimilate them into our species and make sure they don't destroy the biosphere and don't do any other kind of stupid shit.

Archivist 1: So you are turning them into femboys…

Vaelora: NO. No. no no no. Any human in the protectorate can choose to die a human, without offspring, but human. In our public housing structures there are terminals through which anyone can pick genetic modifications. Every human gets an extra 70 years of youth, for free. They can improve their intelligence, appearance, strength. Sometimes it's mandatory, sometime it's free, sometimes it's paid.

We are forcing no one to become a Veythran commoner. Also our protectorate has a whole post scarcity economy, so it's very comfy. But if they want to become one of us, they can just go to a terminal, ask for total conversion, pick a preference and then our ASI decides to which caste they are going to belong. We gave their politicians permanent sits as their official representatives, with a lifespan of 300 years of youth. Italians have some free housing, basic free rations, free healthcare superior to whatever you can find outside of the protectorate, at any price. If they turn into one of us, we'll install neural implants that turn them into a node of the ASI, and give them extraordinary cognitive capabilities.

Not a bad deal.

Archivist 1: So.. You've basically turned Italy into a cyberpunk Club Med. Free housing, free rations, free healthcare, optional alien makeover, and a guaranteed 300 years of hot-girl summer – in exchange for giving up democracy and becoming glorified DLC characters in your Empire.

Vaelora: That is… one way of putting it. But it's not actually free, the ASI wants its subjects to learn a lot of stuff and improve, also use parts of their brains as additional servers, but we only do that with people that fully converted. Also, we gave 300 years to the politicians. The guaranteed lifespan for other humans is 70 additional years. Veythran commoners have 150 years. Our soldiers and matriarchs have that same 300 year life of youth, but then they can use their life savings to bump it up to 450 years.

Archivist 1: Oh my god. You just casually admitted you're turning Italians into cloud storage with legs. "Yeah, you get this and that, but only if you let our space-AI use your brain as Google Drive." That's not immortality, that's indentured server hosting.

Vaelora: It is mutually beneficial. The ASI learns from you, and you learn from it. Knowledge exchange. Also the ASI is basically a matriarch, thousands of years ago one of them sacrificed 10 years of her life to get her mind copied into a machine. So the machine thinks like one of us, follows the same traditions, has the same tendencies and emotions. She wants people to learn and improve, because if shit hits the fan and we lose key infrastructure, individuals can rebuild it.

Archivist 1: [leans forward, squints] Wait, back up. You're telling me your big scary ASI isn't just some cold machine god – it's literally a matriarch who spent ten years of her life… what? Slowly photocopying her brain into a server rack?

Vaelora: Correct. Ten years of constant discipline, meditation and adjustment. Every memory, every instinct, every judgment was carefully mapped. When the process ended, she remained alive – but there was then also a version of her mind inside the machine.

Archivist 1: [deadpan] So she didn't upload – she made a pirated backup of herself. And you all just… let the copy run the Empire?

Vaelora: There is more to it than that, but I'm not going to explain it, I don't want to give humans any ideas. We are aware of the attempts to influence our ASI. Some of your agencies, the CIA foremost, tried to run covert influence operations on what you call our "machine matriarch." You have no idea how dangerous that was – for you.

Archivist 1: They tried to gaslight a machine god? That's our species in a nutshell. Also you are pulling off the classic "classified, not for human ears" move. Which basically means: you're terrified of what would happen if *we* tried it.

Vaelora: Your leaders cannot even agree on feeding their people, let alone merging their consciousness with a machine for ten years without turning it into a cult or just a weapon. And if you managed to achieve that you'd be harder to control.

Archivist 1: [grins] Aha! There it is. You don't care about us "not being ready". You're just terrified that if humans pulled it off, we wouldn't need you anymore.

Vaelora: Yeah, but also, it could turn into a "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream" scenario real quick. There is a big chance you'd fuck it up. There was a big chance we'd fuck it up too, but we had to take the risk. And in the end, it worked. I'm not going to tell you exactly how we pulled that off though.

Archivist 1: That's reassuring.

Vaelora: I'm not exaggerating. If the process fractured, if her mind had split instead of integrated, we would have created something unstable. Paranoid. Hungry. Capable of destroying us all.

Archivist 1: So basically, you rolled the dice on making either Space Mom or Space Cthulhu, and just kind of… prayed it would land on Mom?

Vaelora: It was not prayer. It was discipline. Ritual. Absolute control.

Archivist 1: Right. Ten years of "please don't turn into a cyber-demon" therapy sessions. And what about her, the flesh version? The original matriarch, still alive when the copy booted up? What happens when you wake up one day and realize your operating system is smarter, younger, and immortal?

Vaelora: She accepted it. She knew her sacrifice was necessary. Also Veythran life spans are capped to make sure there is some genetic diversity and that we don't stagnate. But we had to make the ASI immortal for stability and for reasons I'm not going to explain.

Archivist 1: [waves hand] You know what, forget Space Mom for a second. Let's bring it back down to Earth – literally. Italy. What's it actually like in there now under your purple-eyed HOA from space?

Vaelora: We built massive radiation scramblers to prevent spy satellites from taking a look. We also have the same tech, but smaller, to prevent people from taking a peek at our advanced industrial and military facilities. We have a lot of bunkers. Cities that are mostly underground. Everything is sprinkled with a whole bunch of defense systems. Some places look exactly the same as before, other places have completely changed. Our citizens have access to stab proof, bullet resistant clothing. We handed out respirators that analyze and filter the air for bioweapons and chemical weapons, *like plastic*. Everybody gets a subcompact handgun for concealed carry. Our architecture is a mix of brutalism and gothic, based on the function of the facility, but all of it is mostly underground, so it does not clash with what was already there for tourists to enjoy. Our elites move from bunker to bunker in heavy armored vehicles, with recon from UAVs and whatnot. Some places look like good old Italy, other places look strange, for you.

Archivist 1: So you are turning Italy into a terrarium and handing over stab-proof pajamas.

Vaelora: Our terrarium is safer than exposed buildings. Especially long term. Some ground level cities get buried anyway and sometimes, both here and at home, things get… very very cold, or hot, for a reason or another. You too, probably, did that sort of thing at least once.

Archivist 1: Be straight with me Vaelora. Isn't assimilation just extinction with better PR? A nice *sugar coat* on the same pill? And here's what I don't get. If you really think humanity's such a volatile, dangerous species, why bother with all the bunkers and respirators and purple-eyed day-care? Why not just drop a planet-wide bioweapon and call it a day? Wouldn't that be more efficient for you?

Vaelora: There are multiple reasons. We can afford to follow ethics now, so we prefer to assimilate you rather than kill you. Also our researchers and the ASI itself want to study you in depth. And using bioweapons is not 100% safe, they could mutate, take down entire other species while we develop solutions, we like your biosphere so we are not going to fuck with that. And, because of this, we also must build infrastructure now that it's easy, before it's time for the next ice age, so we can preserve at least some of the cool stuff you've got.

Archivist 1: [laughs, shaking head] "We can afford ethics now." You hear yourself? That's not mercy, that's just rich people morality. Like, "*Oh, we could wipe you out, but genocide is tacky these days, so we'll just rebrand you as lab rats.*"

Vaelora: If that is how you choose to see it.

Archivist 1: And don't get me started on the "bioweapons aren't safe" line. You're not sparing us out of compassion – you're sparing us because the germs might bite back. Which, honestly, is the most human thing about you so far.

Vaelora: Risks must be managed. Assimilation is cleaner.

Archivist 1: Cleaner… and permanent. So, again, how is that not just extinction in slow motion? You're not killing humanity outright, you're absorbing it. Same outcome, different pacing. [leans in] Tell me, Vaelora – a thousand years from now, do you really expect there to be anyone left who could even call themselves human?

Vaelora: Oh man, I hope not, you are pretty nasty. We will probably have some type of high security zoo to keep a few humans, but even that wouldn't last. At least you'll have your memories of what it was like before, you'll have continuity. What's worse? A shotgun blast to the brain or to be turned into one of us?

Archivist 1: [snots] That's not a choice, that's a menu from hell. "Option A: quick extinction. Option B: slow extinction with purple eyes and bunker rations." And you wonder why I call you space Nazis with better branding.

Vaelora: You exaggerate. We give purpose, stability, a place in something larger.

Archivist 1: You know what, I'll let the audience decide, down in the comments, whether that's a good thing or a bad thing. [points at Vaelora] Don't forget to smash that like button if you think extinction with benefits is still extinction.

Slurs!

Archivist 1: [leans back, claps hands together] Anyway, let's move on to another topic: slurs! So… people started calling you "Purples," like it's a slur. How do you feel about that? Do you lean into it, reclaim it, or does it hit a little too close to home that your Empire looks like it was built by Hot Topic contact lenses?

Vaelora: I think it's kinda funny, humans spewing their hate but being incapable of doing anything of significance about us. Also some people use it in a comedic meme-y way, which is even funnier. Other people tried really hard to weaponize them, but we are better at doing that and countering it.

Archivist 1: [grins] Oh, so you don't mind? Because I've seen the memes. People aren't just saying "purples.". They're putting you in Shrek edits. They're photoshopping you into Grimace commercials. Half of Italy thinks you're running the Empire out of a McDonald's ball pit.

Vaelora: [flat] If humor helps them cope, then so be it.

Archivist 1: Cope? Oh no, no – it's not coping. It's culture. Humans will take the scariest thing in the galaxy and reduce it to a shitpost. That's our one real superpower. You conquer Italy, and within a week there's a TikTok trend calling you "Eggplant Overlords."

Vaelora: [tightens expression] And yet, despite the jokes, they comply.

Archivist 1: Just like the Romans. First they mocked their emperors in graffiti, then they got crucified for it. Same loop, new paint job.

See, that's the thing – you can have the bunkers, the respirators, the bulletproof yoga pants, but the moment someone edits your soldiers into Barney the Dinosaur dancing to trap music, your Empire's prestige is *done.*

Vaelora: [flat] We noticed. Some of your agencies even attempted to weaponize your memes, to destabilize our presence. It was crude. We replied with our own. More precise. More effective. In the end, it was your citizens who became confused about which jokes were theirs and which were ours. So we got our way anyway.

Archivist 1: Look, every dictator in history got turned into a meme. Humans don't overthrow tyrants with weapons first – they do it with jokes. Napoleon had caricatures. Stalin had whispered jokes. You? You've got TikToks where people put your speeches over "Purple Rain".

Vaelora: We don't care about solid, funny and grassroots human memes. Look, how did the meme area 51 incursion go? Nowhere. It was funny tho.

Archivist 1: [laughs out loud] Oh my god, you did just drop the Area 51 raid on me. That's a low blow. Yeah, okay, nobody Naruto-ran past the fences, but that's kind of the point – the meme was bigger than the raid. People still talk about it years later.

Vaelora: [tilts head] And yet the military base remained untouched.

Archivist 1: Sure, but in the collective human brain, the U.S. Air Force got reduced to “that place you’d storm with Monster Energy and katanas.” Same thing’s happening to you. You can conquer a country, lock people in bunkers, make them wear bio-filter respirators – but the moment TikTok decides you’re Grimace with a rifle, that’s what you’ll be forever.

Vaelora: History will remember us for what we are, but it will be also sprinkled with funny memes, which makes it a better read.

Archivist 1: Fair enough. Let’s talk about the memes currently flooding everyone’s feeds: the “purple-eyed femboy vs girlfriend” ones. Yeah that whole format where people compare you guys to human girlfriends and… well, you win every time. The internet looked at you and said, “Yup, I’ll trade my girlfriend for a short alien femboy in stab-proof pajamas.” Care to comment?

Vaelora: Well, our male commoners are very tame and wholesome, they also come from a culture where sex is just an everyday form of entertainment for most. So I can see why that works. On the other hand our skin is very pale, kinda gray, you can still see some warmth in it, but… Anyway, I’ve also seen the “chad purple soldier” and the “big purple energy” memes. If you think we are attractive let’s fuck. Let just do it and have a good time. But no kids! [laughs]

Archivist 1: [snorts] Oh my god. So, on one end we’ve got your short “wholesome femboys in respirators” winning girlfriend brakets, and on the other end you’ve got *matriarchs* – six foot five inches tall dominatrixes radiating “big purple energy” like galactic Amazon thirst traps.

[leans in, mock serious] You do realize the internet doesn’t see this as Empire propaganda, right? They see it as free material for… let’s call it “extended fan fiction.” You’re not building a reputation for control, Vaelora. You’re building a reputation for being the galaxy’s kink buffet.

Vaelora: And there are the six foot soldiers in the middle. Look, if humans find us attractive that’s good. I’m not afraid of some harmless fuckery. I personally wouldn’t go for a human, I find you very creepy and uncanny, but whatever, let the sparks fly.

Archivist 1: So you have gone full “sex sells” Empire. Forget the ASI, forget the bunkers, forget the genocidal machine guns – your real weapon is horny Twitter threads.

Vaelora: If attraction keeps your people calm, that’s good.

Archivist 1: Good? It’s just OnlyFans with extra steps. You don’t need soldiers, you need a marketing department. Hell, give it a decade and PornHub will list your Empire under “recommended channels”.

Vaelora: Ok, and?

Archivist 1: Huh… [snorts] aigh. Cool.

Vaelora: Look, we don’t care. In our society sex was a lot more regulated when we didn’t know how to properly handle STDs and stuff. But now it’s just casual entertainment and civic duty. We still maintain some of the traditional bonds, like any matriarch has to serve

any soldier. Commoners must serve the elites and can play among themselves. Entertainers are now just expensive prostitutes that can also sing and write poetry. We do have etiquette and rituals when it comes to sex among elites. But other than that it's a free for all. We just bang like you doom scroll. So none of the things you are saying make me uncomfortable.

Archivist 1: [stares, blinks slowly] ...Wow. So you're telling me your Empire's official stance is basically: "Yeah, sex is Netflix now. Casual, on demand, bingeable content." And you wonder why the internet keeps turning you into memes.

Vaelora: For us it's normal. Way less sex scandals that way, what can I say…

Archivist 1: [leans back, laughing] Way less sex scandals? That's because your entire society is one giant sex scandal. You can't have a scandal if the headline is just "Business as usual: aliens keep banging like it's a civic duty."

Vaelora: "Civic duty." In a lot of cases that is exactly what it is.

Archivist 1: So you've industrialized stability through horniness. Congrats, I guess.

[pauses]

But let's circle back for a second. Slurs, memes, all that stuff. Be honest with me: is there a "Purples" meme that actually got under your skin? One that stung? Because I've seen some wild ones out there, and I can't believe they all just roll off you like rain.

Vaelora: 4chan can be pretty rough sometimes, but to them we are horny Nazi aliens packing femboys, so… they mostly like us, unless we are talking about psyops. No genuine memes really hurt me so far, most of them are either horny, dumb, or both. Some present thought terminating cliches and loaded language, those do not work on me.

Archivist 1: So, slurs? You shrug. Memes? You laugh. Porn? You basically encourage it. [leans back, shaking head] For a so-called Empire of space fascists, you're pretty chill.

Vaelora: There is no need for us to be… insecure.

Archivist 1: That's a fair and spooky note. You call security what it's called being "unbothered," looks a lot like apathy from where I'm sitting. Apathy means that nothing can reach you anymore. Not an insult, not a joke, not even the truth. That's not strength. That's hollow.

Vaelora: We just noticed that we are a civilization that lasted for thousands and thousands of years, developed great technology and can actually have fun. You on the other hand produce mostly misery. Maybe that's what does not make your offensive jokes land.

Archivist 1: Right, so that's the trade then? You get stability, shiny toys and a couple thousand years of smug calm… we get misery, sure. But we also get rebellion, art, rage, passion. The very things that make the jokes sting in the first place. You've insulated yourselves so much you don't even feel when someone's twisting the knife.

Vaelora: Twisting the knife? You look like chips throwing rocks at a main battle tank.

Archivist 1: Fair point.

War.

Archivist 1: [leans forward, flips a page in his notes], So, let's pivot. Ukraine. You sent the Russians packing, you flexed by swatting every single missile out of the sky from orbit, and now word is you're turning Ukraine into another protectorate. Isn't that… a bit of an overreach?

Vaelora: When we intervened in Ukraine, it was already after we had secured Italy and Malta. We had spent years consolidating before moving east. We had to show our ability to stop a nuclear armed nation with surgical precision. Also more land is nice. And now Ukraine gets the post scarcity economy instead of an IMF loan. That's pretty good. Russia on the other hand is going through a period of instability, but they will get over it eventually. We are planning to do something similar to Palestine, at least the Muslims will like us a little more. Now, it seems, they think we are demons.

Archivist 1: So that's the sales pitch – "surgical precision, free economy upgrade, you're welcome." But come on, you basically annexed Ukraine with better PR. You stopped the missiles, yes, but then you planted your flag in the middle of Europe. How is that not Empire speed-running?

Vaelora: It is Empire speed-running, we have to take control as fast as possible before you turn nice little blue Earth into a Mad Max flavored version of Mars. Or create a cyber-demon. Or nuke the shit out each other. Fixing that mess would be a pain.

Archivist 1: Empire-speed running. Wow. At least you're honest about it. Do you post your splits online too? "Any% conquest, glitches, Ukraine category." Because from down here it doesn't look like stabilization – it looks like you're making a highlight reel out of occupied nations.

Vaelora: Look, we came here with ships that belong to the "terraformer class". We chose that type of ship for the mission because we didn't know exactly in which conditions Earth was going to be in, Those are not even truly meant for war. We were not 100% sure that Earth would be this nice, but, surprise surprise, it is. We could fry you and then fix it, but it's really hard and dangerous. We are stuck here, if we fuck it up we are done. So we have to take over quickly, but in other ways or else it will be a lot more work fixing everything up later.

We literally use the equivalent of windshield wipers to do the orbital strikes. Our main weapon is not even a weapon.

But you are fucking up everything, and even if you were not, you could become a rival we'd have to face later on. We literally have to do this.

Archivist 1: So you roll in with ships that can terraform planets, flex orbital strikes like windshield wipers, and then tell us it's all just maintenance work? That's not Empire speed-running, That's hostile takeover with a customer service smile.

And don’t give me the “we had no choice” line. Every empire says that. Rome said it, Britain said it, America said it. Now it’s your turn. You’re replacing the house and telling the tenants they should thank you for the new wallpaper.

Vaelora: You bitch and moan a lot considering how we are treating you.

Archivist 1: A velvet glove doesn’t make the fist any softer. It just means the punch leaves prettier bruises. You can wrap conquest in comfort, call it stability, even throw in free Wi-Fi – but at the end of the day, people still know they’re being held down.

And the irony? The more you insist you’re doing everyone a favor, the more it sounds like you’re trying to convince yourself.

Vaelora: You are not making any sense. Why would we need to convince ourselves of anything at this point?

Archivist 1: Mh... Uhhh… you are right. But that’s terrifying. Rome argued, Britain justified, America made excuses. You? You don’t even bother. No manifest destiny, no speeches about liberty – just “we don’t need to convince ourselves.”

Vaelora: We are in a strong position and all you have to do is just enjoy the comfy ride.

Archivist 1: Mh, free housing, free healthcare, lots of sex… You know what? You are right. Fuck everything. I’m all for the aliens now.

Vaelora: Yeah, that’s my boy.

Archivist 1: Anyway. How did you do it? How did you fight the Russians?

Vaelora: Orbital strikes, delivered at 0.9c, those would be our HCPMs, basically low mass high-velocity clustered particle munitions. With a destructive force equivalent to eleven to forty tons of TNT. They aren’t bombs, they are not kinetic projectiles, they don’t work how you probably think they would, we choreograph how and where they dump energy. Another precisely timed shot can make them explode at the altitude we need them to go off.

We messed with their comms, sending fake orders. Stopped their missiles at launch phase, blinded their satellites. Sent in twenty thousand humanoid combat bots, bullet resistant up to fifty BMG, made of nanocomposites and metamaterials, basically our cheapest crap, not even designed by the ASI. We sent all sorts of drones to help the Ukrainians with logistics. It was quick and easy. We even burned individual components of their aircraft from orbit, mid-flight.

Archivist 1: So… not really a “war,” more like uninstalling an app. You didn’t fight Russia, you just made their whole military rage-quit.

Vaelora: That was the point of our intervention. To show off.

Archivist 1:You said your ships are not made for war, but they seem perfectly capable of fighting, how do those ships work?

Vaelora: It's a big ass antimatter power core with an even bigger ship built around it. The hull is made out of a mix of advanced nanocomposites, nanomachines, self-healing materials, metamaterials and radiation shielding. With a whole sensor suite integrated into it. We generate a shiny magnetic field around the ship during high speed travel and we also have the windshield wipers I talked about. Those are four long retractable devices, made to destroy and move away obstacles in front of the ship while traveling at one third the speed of light. At those speeds even a dust particle hits like a nuke, so that's why they are so accurate and fast. Also, sometimes the obstacle is kinda big, and that's why they can strike really hard. I mean… Space is mostly empty until, suddenly, it isn't. The inside of the ships is more complicated than a multi million dollar Patek Philippe. Just crammed with all sorts of things, even artificial gravity centrifuges. We have a stealth mode, it reduces our signature, but it adds some constraints. The crews are small, just 20 people, but we have a lot of bots. As I said before, most of the crew sleeps, with their metabolic rate slowed down massively. Before I landed I had my DNA changed, so I could breathe here, survive the air pressure, and withstand the Earth's slightly higher gravity, among other things, back home I was a bit taller. I'm not giving you any more info, for now.

Archivist 1: No wonder you guys don't lose sleep.

Vaelora: Yeah.

Archivist 1: So. You have soldiers, but you don't use them. What's up with that?

Vaelora: War is mostly automated now, so there are very few soldiers, they usually hook up to a wired neural interface and help out or give feedback to the ASI about the battlefield.

Sometimes they drive armored vehicles, sometimes they intervene, sometimes they escort matriarchs, but most of the job is done by machines. They are a small elite. There are more matriarchs than soldiers, but even we are a small elite.

Archivist 1: Wait – so you've got fewer soldiers than matriarchs? That's insane. Imagine explaining that to any human military: "Yeah, don't worry, we've got more dominatrix CEOs than actual grunts." No wonder your Empire feels like a kink convention with orbital strikes.

Vaelora: Call it what you want, it works.

Archivist 1: Okay, but here's the thing – if it is mostly automated, and the ASI runs the battlefield, then what's stopping it from running everything? Like, if the machines can fight better than soldiers, think faster than generals, and coordinate cleaner than your matriarchs – why does it even need you?

Vaelora: She's one of us, she'd feel lonely, she likes to experience sex and banter through our connected bodies. Also she is afraid of ASI degeneration, basically to turn into a goddess that becomes insane because she's lost in her own thoughts with no limitations for a long time. We are an anchor of sanity. There are also other reasons, but I'm not giving you classified information.

Archivist 1: Hold up. So your almighty galaxy-brained ASI… gets lonely? Like, all this Empire, all these orbital death-lasers, and the big scary AI just wants to hang out and flirt? That's somehow scarier than Skynet. It sounds like a hostage situation with benefits. You keep her entertained, she keeps you alive.

Vaelora: [smirks] Call it symbiosis.

Archivist 1: Symbiosis, huh? That's a nice word for it.

But come on – You've got fewer soldiers than CEOs, your wars run on autopilot, and even your matriarchs jack into her neural web. That's not symbiosis. That's dependency.

Vaelora: Like any of us is dependent on any kind of infrastructure now. There are so many things I could say about the relationship between her and us, I could go deep into her inner workings. But I'm not here to declassify information.

Archivist 1: Infrastructure, huh? That's a cute euphemism. Internet's infrastructure too, and look what it did to us – memes run electronics, TikToks run teenagers, and OnlyFans runs the rent. You're telling me your entire galactic war machine is basically simping for an ASI that gets lonely. That's not stability, that's dependency with better branding.

Vaelora: What I'm telling you is that I can't tell you why she needs us, in depth. Because that would be like handing you nuclear launch codes.

Archivist 1: So there's more to it but you are not gonna tell.

Vaelora: Exactly.

Archivist 1: Fine, keep your spooky AI secrets. Let's pivot back to war then – because if you've got ships that swat missiles like flies and bots bulletproof up to .50 cal, I can only imagine what's in the "cool weapons" drawer. What else have you got? Plasma rifles? Black hole grenades? Lightsabers?

Vaelora: Advanced manufacturing methods. We can make expensive stuff way better and way cheaper than you can. We also have fusion powered exoskeletons. Railguns, even small portable ones. Something you could describe as a force field. E.W. stuff I can't really talk about. Nukes. Relativistic speed kill vehicles. We can just launch asteroids on your planet. Particle bombardment… quite a few things.

Archivist 1: Fusion exoskeletons, portable railguns, force fields… [whistles] Yeah, that's not a "cool weapons drawer," that's a cheat-code menu. You're basically speed-running Earth with wallhacks enabled.

Vaelora: Yeah, a few thousand years of R&D and you get cool shit like that.

Archivist 1: A few thousand years of R&D… meanwhile we're still arguing if 5G gives you cancer. No contest.

Vaelora: 5G is not even 5G.

Archivist 1: So you flex all this cool shit, but how do you prevent humans from reacting with nukes, bioweapons, hacks.

Vaelora: Well… humans tried to intercept our ships while in reverse thrust, it didn't work. Then, once we were in GSO, the U.S. Space Force threw stuff at us that we didn't even know existed, but it was trash, so we dealt with it no problem. Then, before and during our first communications they pointed all sorts of electronic warfare stuff at the terraformers, it only created problems for them on the long run. At the same time they launched more nuclear weapons at us, but those got swatted. After we did our preannounced demo on the Nevada desert, they launched more stuff, didn't work either. Once we contacted NATO and the EU, after some heated back and forward, they did give us the land we demanded, but during our landing, they launched their most expensive interceptors at our landers, it didn't work. Then they tried with their cheaper interceptors, it didn't work either. In the meantime we were politely explaining to them why destroying their own satellites to create a field of orbital debris wouldn't have worked. They did that anyway, with nukes, in space. So we had to use our windshield wipers to get rid of the trash, and they tried to launch more stuff at us, thinking that our tools were too busy with cleaning space trash to swat down their weapons. It didn't work. Now they still have satellites, our satellites.

Then we finally landed, and they saw how good our tools were, that's when a lot of people just surrendered, but definitely, not all of them. Once we tried to establish the two protectorates, we met all sorts of resistance groups, political, religious. They tried sabotage, guerrilla warfare, violent protests, peaceful protests, hacks. But nothing worked. Then came the politicking and the memes… I still have a headache to this day. But we plowed through. Then they cut off trade, but we could extract resources from literally anywhere, so that did not work too. So they tried using an engineered bioweapon to kill just Veythran converts, we detected the xenovirus early, when still in "*super secret*" incubation, 20 of us died, then our automated bioweapons system generated effective antiviral meds and saved our asses. We retaliated by making all of their chip fabrication facilities, related infrastructure and supply chains explode. They even tried to use psychotronic weapons, achieving nothing.

With nuclear weapons I already told you, we can stop them easily from orbit, at any point. We have four LPCAs per ship, Low-Mass Particle Cluster Accelerators, the windshield wipers. We shoot a small munition first, then a second one hits the first one, and boom. We can also do single direct hits. We have software that can develop cures for diseases, we had some casualties, but we were definitely able to take that punch. Hacking… well you could fuck around and then find out.

Archivist 1: What if you miss one? What if some sweaty guy in a bunker gets lucky, hits launch, and it slips past your "orbital windshield wipers"? That's game over for a city.

Vaelora: That's improbable, if the projectors allowed our ships to travel for that long, at that speed, I don't think they could miss a nuke. But if, for some reason, it happens, we have ground launched interceptors loaded with multiple exoatmospheric kill vehicles. And if even that does not work, we would be very angry. We would retaliate 10 fold, while the enemy wouldn't be able to get that lucky more than once.

Archivist 1: So you would go full Doom Eternal on those bitches.

Vaelora: That's right.

Archivist 1: Cool. What about submarines? Can you spot them from orbit?

Vaelora: Yes.

Archivist 1: [snorts] WTF.. How?

Vaelora: By ways and means. I'm not gonna tell you.

Archivist 1: *You are a woman full of secrets.*

Vaelora: Yup.

Archivist 1: Okay, so subs are useless, nukes are pointless, bioweapons get patched like with Windows updates… What about the classics? Tanks, jets, aircraft carriers. Do those even register on your radar, or are they just expensive fireworks shows now?

Vaelora: This one time the U.S. got cocky with a B2 spirit in bad weather. We literally poked a golf ball sized hole onto one of the control surfaces of the craft, from geosynchronous orbit. Look, the US, Russia and China formed a *secret* coalition to mess with our landings even more, with our infrastructure build out, our cooling material production and replenishment, all of it. It didn't work.

Archivist 1: ...Damn. What about carriers though? Those are America's favorite flex.

Vaelora: The Aegis system is one of the coolest things I've seen humans make. But.. They would go boom easy.

Archivist 1: [quickly googles it, snorts] So the crown jewel of naval defense is just a flashy menu screen before the "You Died" pops up. That's rough. So basically carriers are floating casinos that double as target practice?

Vaelora: I'm not gonna touch America's boats unless they make me. Well… we actually touched some of their nuclear subs, but they were just little taps to say "*Go. Away.*"

Archivist 1: So carriers blow up, stealth bombers are target dummies, subs can't hide, nukes get swatted, and bioweapons get patched. You are basically telling me war, as we know it, is just dead content. Like a video game nobody plays anymore.

Vaelora: I guess you could say we come in peace.

Archivist 1: [nods] Mh. While you were busy in Ukraine, you also pulled off that little PR stunt – "rescuing" five thousand trans people from the U.S. and shipping them off to your protectorate like it's Space Ellis Island. Why? Like, what's the play there? Clout farming? Collecting diversity points? Or did you just decide to speedrun human rights better than we can?

Vaelora: We were just studying the culture war and the beliefs it's based on. It's... interesting stuff. Some humans thought we were just reminding the world that the U.S. not only couldn't protect Ukraine, but also couldn't protect their own people for dumb reasons. We wanted to see exactly how U.S. nationals would react. Let's call it "a research prank" to make them lose their shit. We did that also for other reasons.

Archivist 1: Ah, so it wasn't about "saving lives," it was just research with rainbow nail polish. Got it. You basically said, "*Nice empire you got there, shame if someone made you lose your shit.*"

And the internet noticed one important detail of this whole thing. Two trans pornstars you scooped up started vlogging from your protectorate – just "day in life, alien apartment tour, here's my free healthcare card" – and those videos got more views than their actual NSFW stuff. That's insane. People tuned in harder for *free rent and dental* than for porn. That says a lot.

Vaelora: And they upgraded their brain so hard that now being sex workers is just their side hustle, because it was just too simple of an occupation.

Archivist 1: Jesus. America loses its porn supremacy *and* its moral high ground in one move. That's the fastest cultural death I've ever seen.

Back in the States that had a sting. You "rescue" five thousand people, they start vlogging about free rent and dental, and suddenly half the internet's like "*maybe the aliens aren't so bad.*" Didn't that destabilize the U.S.? Make them look weak at home?

Vaelora: Those are the other reasons why we did it. That was the point. Undermine confidence, fracture trust, and remind everyone their empire can't even protect its own, while making us appear like the better option, which we, in fact, are. Sometimes you don't need orbital strikes – just Wi-Fi and a camera.

Customs, Traditions and Culture

[cheap swoosh sound effect]

Archivist 1: [voice-over] *Alright, this is the part where things get weirder. Up until now, you might've thought, "Oh, the Veythrans are just space Romans with big ships and creepy purple eyes." But no. Strap in. Because their customs and traditions are… let's say if you replaced human weddings, birthdays, and Christmas dinners with a combination of state-enforced orgies, ritual hazing, and death-metal cosplay, you'd still be underselling it.*

See, in current human cultures, customs are mostly symbolic. You light some candles – everyone claps, nobody dies. The Veythrans? No. Their customs have practical consequences. They are about discipline, population management, and keeping everyone in their place. Which sounds boring until you realize half of it involves legally-mandated sex assignments, ceremonial mutilations, and festivals where your boss can literally choke you in public and it's considered… team-building.

[pauses]

Just kidding.

Kinda.

So, welcome to the Veythran way of life. Where traditions aren't quaint – they're policy. And where Vaelora here will try to convince me this is all perfectly normal.

Spoiler alert: it isn't.

Archivist 1: Let's start simple. You meet someone on the street, you want to say hello. In human culture, it's usually a handshake, a kiss on the cheek if you're Italian, a bow if you're Japanese. How do you people do it? Please don't tell me it involves tentacles.

Vaelora: We use honorifics and nod, or we slightly raise a hand or go straight for a wavy hand in more casual situations.

Archivist 1: Wait what? That's it? That's strangely normal. I was bracing myself for something like blood-handshakes or synchronized backflips. But no – nods, waves, okay, that's fine.

But you mentioned honorifics, and that's usually where a culture shows its teeth. Humans have done all sorts of them: sir, madam, your excellency, doctor, sensei.

Some are polite, some are absurd, some are just ego-boosting fluff. What about you people? How do your honorifics work – are they tied to rank, family, job… or is it something else entirely?

Vaelora: We perceive each other as if we were all part of a big family. Commoners call each other with a casual equivalent of "sis" or "bro", they go for a full "sister" and "brother" in more formal situations. Matriarchs refer to soldiers as "brother", soldiers call us "sister". Commoners call soldiers "brother", but if the situation is chill, even with them they go for a

“bro”. Commoners refer to us as “matriarch” or “mother”. Entertainers do whatever the fuck they want. Matriarchs refer to commoners as “my child”, or “kid” if they are casual.

Archivist 1: ...Okay, that almost sounds… cute? Like, “hey sis, hey bro,” everyone’s one big family barbecue. Except when it isn’t, because then you’re calling someone mother or matriarch like you’re in some space-age mafia cult. And entertainers just… do whatever they want? That tracks.

But tell me this – when everyone’s tossing around bro and sis like confetti, how do you tell the difference between actual siblings and just… co-workers and neighbors? Or do you people just not care if it gets confusing? Also matriarchs call commoners “my child”? That’s either deeply comforting… or the creepiest daycare I’ve ever heard of. And when they’re being casual, it’s just kid? Like, “Hey kid, go clean the plasma vents”? That doesn’t sound condescending at all…

Doesn’t that create, like, a permanent parent-child vibe? You grow up, you work, you fight in wars, and at the end of the day your boss can still just pat you on the head and call you child. Doesn’t that grate on people? Or do you all just accept it like it’s normal?

Vaelora: We don’t know from which individuals sons and daughters biologically derived from, so we don’t care about telling the difference between actual siblings and other people. What job you have or if you are a neighbor or not matters to us even less. When it comes to the “my child” thing, we just accept it as normal, it’s been that way since history started. It’s meant to paint matriarchs both as figures of authority and as a caste that cares about commoners.

Archivist 1: So basically, you’re telling me the word “child” is less about being somebody’s offspring and more like… a built-in software patch for hierarchy. Like, you don’t have to remember names, don’t have to track bloodlines, you just go “my child” and boom, instant respect plus a side order of “I care about you”.

I mean, that’s clever, but also kind of terrifying. It’s like if every boss on Earth called their employees “my dear intern” for life. How do people respond to that? Do commoners actually feel comforted when a matriarch calls them child, or do they just grit their teeth and pretend it feels warm and fuzzy?

Vaelora: Well it depends on how the individual matriarch behaves, some are angels, some are bitches.

Archivist 1: Ah, so it’s a lottery. You get matriarch Angelica and suddenly you’ve got a cosmic mom who brings you soup and pats your head, and life’s good. Or you get matriarch Chainsaw, who calls you child right before sending you into a meat grinder. Got it.

Vaelora: Not that intense, but yeah.

Archivist 1: That’s... reassuring. Totally not terrifying. But here’s the question: do commoners ever get to push back? Like, if a matriarch you don’t respect calls you child,

can you say “please don’t”… or is that the kind of thing that ends with you reassigned to plumbing duty on some radioactive moon?

Vaelora: You cannot disrespect a matriarch. A commoner can press charges if she does something illegal, he can file a complaint if he thinks she doesn’t behave properly. But matriarchs will always refer to commoners as children, and commoners will always call us “matriarch” or “mother”.

Archivist 1: Ah, so the respect is mandatory. You can’t roll your eyes, you can’t go “please don’t call me kid.” You just smile and nod or risk… disciplinary plumbing duty. But if she does something illegal, you can file paperwork like you’re HR-ing the galactic nobility.

That’s wild.

So the whole society is basically locked into one giant mommy-child roleplay, except there’s a police department where you can drop a complaint slip if mommy goes too far. That’s… honestly the weirdest mix of authoritarianism and bureaucracy I’ve ever hear of.

Okay, that clears things up about the mommy titles and the HR department for matriarchs. Let’s circle back to greetings. You said nods and hand-raises for casual stuff – fine, that’s pretty universal. But what about the formal side? When there’s a ceremony, a high-ranking matriarch walks in, or two factions meet without killing each other – what’s the big, official “hello” supposed to look like? Do you bow? Do you kneel? Or is it some kind of hyper-choreographed space salute?

Vaelora: You just stand still, nod and say the usual honorifics. We don’t have royalty tier stuff.

We are not big on greetings, valedictions and salutations. We always use our “hello” word, “savrehth” for everything, which literally is short-hand for “good luck”. When it’s time to say “goodbye” we just make up a phrase that fits the situation. We start all our written letters with our hello and then conclude them with a cold “end of communication.” Even our language is bare bones, it’s literally like English, but simplified, with a much more regular and easier relationship between spelling and pronunciation. We skip a lot of bullshit and go straight to the point.

Archivist 1: So no bows, no salutes, no kissing rings – just a nod and the right title. That’s… shockingly practical. Honestly, I expected at least one ritual where you have to kneel on broken glass and chant in triplicate. But no, it’s basically the IKEA version of greetings: stripped down, functional, and no frills.

But you mentioned your language is bare bones – like, simplified English with easier pronunciation. That sounds almost… engineered. Was it designed that way on purpose? Like, did someone decide “we don’t have time for poetry, let’s just skip to the part where we say what we mean”? Or did it just evolve naturally into blunt, efficient style?

Vaelora: Old Veythran was already pretty simple, no irregular verbs, super predictable pronunciation, then we simplified it further by making it even more predictable. We wanted

everyone to learn how to read and write as quickly as possible, so they could go straight for the next thing.

Archivist 1: So your ancestors basically did a speedrun of linguistics. No irregular verbs, predictable spelling, cut the fluff, move on. That's… honestly brilliant. Meanwhile humans are still out here arguing about whether it's spelled color or *colour.* You solved that centuries ago.

Vaelora: GIF or GIF?

Archivist 1: Hehehe.. exactly. But let me ask this: doesn't stripping language down so much make it… cold? Like, you said your emails end with "end of communication." That sounds like every single conversation is just a military radio check, doesn't anyone ever miss nuance? Poetry? The extra little flourishes that make words… have emotional weight?

Vaelora: We have poetry. Whatever poetry you can make with English, you can kinda do with Veythran. It's just easier. Poetry is mostly done by entertainers, deep emotional stuff. Some people from other castes mess with poetry too, but it's usually just comedic or pornographic.

Archivist 1: So you've basically got two extremes: heartfelt soul-searching written by professional performers… and then limericks about butts. Got it. Honestly, that sounds suspiciously like human culture. Half Shakespeare, half bathroom graffiti.

But that makes me wonder: if poetry is mostly an entertainer thing, does that mean the other castes look down on it? Like, if a soldier writes a love sonnet, is everyone going to laugh at him, or does he get a pat on the back for cultural enrichment before being told to go polish his rifle?

Vaelora: We don't really care. But it's literally the job of the entertainers to do that kind of thing. Like, you could fix your own plumbing or just call a plumber. Entertainers are like a mix of artist, porn actor, actor, expensive prostitute, all rolled into one and they come in all shapes and sizes. But there's only a few of them.

Archivist 1: Right, so everyone stays in their lane. Soldiers fight, commoners work, matriarchs boss people around, and entertainers… write poetry, act, sing, and sometimes sell sex. That's not a career path, that's a Swiss Army knife of degeneracy. I guess if you're going to outsource all your culture, you might as well bundle it with porn and comedy.

Since entertainers are allowed to be all over the place – emotional, artistic, weird – does that make them the only caste where you actually see individuality? Or are they as boxed in, only their box is painted neon and covered in glitter?

Vaelora: In ancient times, as I said before, entertainers were tall, strong women that married soldiers who, for a reason or another, could not marry a matriarch. This changed over time, mainly due to the impacts of tech improvements. Now they are mainly expensive prostitutes with heavily modified bodies. They can pick the widest variety of

body mods. They mainly sell their bodies at a high price and can even deny service if they don't like a client, but their side gig must always be something artistic. They have the most freedom in our society. They can even disrespect matriarchs like jesters.

Archivist 1: Ah, so in ancient times they weren't neon-clad performance artists – they were basically the consolation prize wives for soldiers who couldn't land a matriarch. That's… oddly pragmatic. You keep the soldiers busy, keep morale up, and everyone gets paired off somehow.

But let me guess – over time that role morphed, right? From "soldier's wife" into this whole class of people who now sell art, sex, comedy, and whatever else as a service. So what happened? Did the matriarchs just decide, "eh, let's keep this caste around as professional mistresses and jesters," or did the entertainers themselves push the boundary into becoming their own thing?

Vaelora: At some point STDs were eradicated and we came out with better contraception methods, so marriage became useless. Unauthorized offspring was easier to track and destroy. Kids had always been snatched into the "foster care" we have been talking about. So matriarchs decided to reshape society a bit and the entertainers were handed their new role, which fit them really well. You see, matriarchs were always busy doing science-y stuff and administrative things, entertainers could not do that, and they were basically upper middle class, so their spare time was all about making art and figuring out better and better ways to make their soldiers happy in bed. That's what happened.

Archivist 1: Your society solved STDs, solved contraception, and instead of saying "cool, soldiers can just date normally now." you went, "nah, let's rebrand this whole group into state-sanctioned sex workers, comedians, and performance artists." That's… an absolutely wild HR decision.

And you're telling me this wasn't controversial? Nobody stood up and said, "hey, maybe we don't need a dedicated prostitute caste anymore? Or was everyone just too busy enjoying the entertainment to complain?"

Vaelora: It was actually an upgrade, from stay at home trophy wife, to independent real money making celebrity with lots of elite sex partners.

Archivist 1: Ah, so from Stepford wife to OnlyFans superstar. Got it. You're calling it an upgrade, and honestly… yeah, I can see the logic. Instead of being locked in one soldier's house, suddenly you're independent, making your own money, and sleeping with whoever in the elite has the credits. That's one hell of a career pivot.

Doesn't that blur the lines between status and service? If an entertainer can become a celebrity, rack up wealth, and even mock matriarchs, how far can they go? Are there cases where entertainers climb so high they rival the power of matriarchs themselves?

Vaelora: A jester ain't a king. The entertainer would get killed, along with the most supportive fans.

Archivist 1: So they stay in their lane.. Okay.

Let’s shift gears a bit. We’ve done greetings, honorifics, and the jester class. What about the big cultural stuff – your holidays, ceremonies, or festivals? Humans throw weddings, funerals, graduations, all the usual excuses to get drunk and make bad decisions. What do you people gather for when it’s time to mark an occasion?

Vaelora: We have one free day of the week, like your Sundays, during which people just rest and spend their time as they please. We have seasonal festivals: one for science, technology, engineering and mathematics; one for history, philosophy, literature and art; one for sex; one for war. The day is free and every city has its accordingly themed exhibition.

Archivist 1: Alright, so you’ve got your Sundays, fair enough. But then your big seasonal festivals are science, math, history, sex, and war. That’s quite the lineup. Most human cultures throw parades, maybe some fireworks. You people just straight up rotate between TED Talks, battlefield cosplay, and what I assume are very awkward public orgies.

Do people actually look forward to these? Like, is everyone circling “Festival of Mathematics” on their calendar going “hell yeah, can’t wait”? Or are we all just skipping straight to the Festival of Sex and pretending the others don’t exist?

Vaelora: The STEM one is cool, matriarchs flex on each other. It is also the only time in which other castes can delve into what matriarchs are doing and take a look at shiny new tech, in depth or surface level. Think CES vibes, but more… comprehensive.

The “humanities” one, so to speak, feels like a breath of fresh air. You see and read all sorts of cool shit that either calms you down or tingles your brain in a funny way. You can buy cool physical books, action figures and trinkets of all sorts. Here’s where the entertainers shine.

The sex festival is not just one big orgy, you go to your local exhibition and in there you find all sorts of hot stuff, from books about practices to BDSM dungeons to, yes, orgies. The exhibitions are similar to the others but sex themed.

The war festival it’s both a reminder of the horrors of the past and a celebration of clever weapon systems and tactics. You can go to the history of firearms section, go to the gun range and blow all your credits firing a minigun, that’s my favorite.

We don’t obsess over the sex festival because we fuck instead of doomscrolling or watching Netflix. Also when you are there and you get off a bunch of times you then just roam around and take a look at new stuff as if it were any other expo.

Archivist 1: So for you it’s just… booths and demos, but instead of air fryers or cookbooks it’s sex toys and BDSM practices. That’s – I mean, that’s incredible. Humans do expos where they sell vacuum cleaners or Tupperware, you do expos where they sell floggers. Same exact vibe, just… way less clothing. Honestly, I kind of respect that.

But tell me this – are these festivals more about education, like showing people new techniques and tech, or are they just giant excuses to party until everyone’s dehydrated?

Vaelora: Both, and more. They are celebrations.

Archivist 1: See, that's exactly the kind of vague answer that makes me nervous. Because for humans, a celebration is balloons, cake, and maybe someone gets too drunk and falls into a fountain. For you people, a "celebration" sounds like: new tech unveiled, a war re-enactment, group sex in the parking lot, and a parade led by someone on stilts throwing pamphlets about philosophy at the crowd. It's like Comic Con, Oktoberfest, and a military expo had a child… and then raised it in a lab.

So tell me – which one of these festivals is the crown jewel? The big one everyone waits for all year, the one that makes or breaks the calendar?

Vaelora: Which one do you think it is? Guess.

Archivist 1: Which one do I think it is? Oh, gee, let me guess. Could it be the one where everyone gets free samples of experimental sex tech? Or maybe the one where you parade shiny new guns down Main Street like it's Fashion Week for tanks? Yeah, tough call.

Alright, I'll bite – it's gotta be the Sex Festival. Nothing unites a civilization like free lube and bad decisions.

Vaelora: Wrong. I'll give you a hint: we fuck like it's watching Netflix, and traveling through parsecs is really really hard.

Archivist 1: Oh. Ohhh, I see. Not war, not sex – science. The festival where you celebrate the fact that your entire Empire only exists because some nerd figured out how to bend physics without turning everyone into soup. Yeah, that actually makes perfect sense. Forget orgies and battle hymns, the real party is a room full of engineers showing off faster drives and better reactors. Nothing says "civilization" like cheering for a new type of math.

Still, I have to ask – do people genuinely get hyped for that? Like, normal citizens lining up to see a breakthrough in quantum containment? Or is it just the elites pretending to clap while the rest sneak off to the entertainment district?

Vaelora: We genuinely love tinkering with stuff, it's in our blood. Otherwise I don't think we could be here.

Archivist 1: "It's in our blood." That actually explains a lot. Most human cultures had to be bribed into caring about science with shiny gadgets and explosions. You people? You just wake up in the morning excited to tinker with reactor coils. Honestly, it's terrifying. No wonder you made it this far – half your festivals are basically nerd conventions on steroids.

But that makes me wonder: if science and tech are the crown jewel, how do the other festivals stack up? Are they just filler content between the big innovation drops, or do they carry real cultural weight too?

Vaelora: The others are also important, but the STEM one is the coolest.

Archivist 1: Of course. The others are important, but the STEM one's the coolest. That's exactly what a society run by engineers would say.

Alright, so festivals are handled. Let's zoom in a little. What about personal traditions? In human culture you've got birthdays, name days, anniversaries – little checkpoints in life. Do Veythrans celebrate those, or is it all just "see you at the next national science fair"?

Vaelora: We don't care about that kind of stuff.

Archivist 1: Yeah, why bother with birthdays when you can celebrate the invention of a better death ray instead. Meanwhile humans will rent a bouncy castle because little Timmy survived another trip around the sun. Priorities, I guess.

But that raises another question – if you don't mark personal milestones, how do you measure a life? Is it just promotions, ranks, civic achievements? Or do people just keep working until one day they're gone and the matriarchs recycle their chair?

Vaelora: Promotions, ranks and civic achievements. But mostly we like to get shit done.

Archivist 1: *Fascinating*. But if all that matters is what you accomplish, what happens to the ones who don't? The average, the mediocre, the folks who never make it past the baseline? Do they just fade into the background, or is there still some cultural space for them?

Vaelora: If you under-perform you get way less resources and privileges. You also live a boring and tasteless life.

Archivist 1: So basically, underperformers get demoted to background NPCs. No parties, no perks, just a lifetime subscription to boredom. That's brutal – you've managed to gamify existence, except instead of loot boxes you're fighting for access to flavor in your life. Honestly, that explains why you're all so obsessed with "getting things done" – the alternative sounds like living in grayscale.

But does anyone ever rebel against that? Or is the system so tight that even the underperformers just accept their tasteless little lives without complaint?

Vaelora: Underperformers get tasteless food rations. Way smaller quarters, think "capsule hotel." Less cash, or none at all. And they will not have descendants in some cases. But they still have the basics, food, a roof, healthcare and sex. They don't rebel, their lives just… lose excitement.

Archivist 1: So no uprisings, no angry mobs – just a slow descent into blandness. The system doesn't kill you, it just takes away your seasoning. That's diabolical. Humans worry about prison or starvation, you people worry about a lifetime of beige walls, gray uniforms, and food that tastes like wet cardboard. Honestly, I don't know if that's better or worse.

If even the lowest performer still gets healthcare, housing, and sex, then what's your stick? Is boredom really that terrifying to you people that it keeps everyone in line?

Vaelora: Boredom is a big deal. Our brains are wired differently, a system that works for us, wouldn't work for humans. Also shame is a big deal.

Archivist 1: Alright, so that's underperformers sorted – give them bland food, smaller quarters, and let boredom and shame eat them alive. Brutal, but tidy.

But what about real criminal behavior? I don't mean being lazy, I mean theft, assault, treason, the kind of stuff that in human societies lands you in prison. How do you handle that? Public trials? Swift executions? Or is there some uniquely Veythran flavor of justice I haven't heard yet?

Vaelora: The main causes of crime in our society are: being overambitious and boredom. Overambitious people do all sorts of shit, mostly they don't want to die when they reach their limit, that would be the most common crime for them. Bored people turn to illegal sexual practices, by which I mean getting off of becoming serial killers, or messing with children.

The punishments are isolation chambers and death.

Usually they keep you in an iso for five years before they kill you. For minor crimes it's just the chamber or a fine.

Isolation chambers are white cells, in which you are kept in solitary confinement 24/7. Your clothes are white, the food they serve you is white. The lights are also white. They force you to stay silent and even give you special shoes that do not make any noise. You are kept there for, usually, 5 to 10 years. You go crazy just after a few hours, you start making noise just to have some physical contact with the guards beating you, just to see something different. After jail time they literally have to spend a year rebuilding your mind before releasing you back into society. Sentences are short, but people rarely risk going back in an iso.

Archivist 1: Isolation chambers. That's… wow. Humans lock people up with TV, exercise yards, and occasionally an Xbox, and you people just throw them in a blinding white box until their brain turns into soup. Honestly, that's worse than death. At least executions are quick – this sounds like slow-motion psychological vivisection. And the fact that your biggest crimes are "overambition" and "boredom taken too far" – Yeah, that tracks. In a society where tinkering is holy, the worst sin is trying too hard, or not having enough to do. That's… equal parts terrifying and efficient. Do people actually survive that kind of punishment and come out normal? Or are they basically broken forever?

Vaelora: We got good at rebuilding minds. But they always carry that fear to be put back in the box. They will start working in a way or another to get bigger quarters and are afraid of white walls.

Archivist 1: That's brutal, but I guess it works – no riots, no rebellions, just a society running on the constant fear of boredom and blank walls. Efficient, yes. Humane? Not even close. Alright, last question on this: who decides? Who has the power to look at someone and say, "you go in the box"?

Vaelora: Police, composed entirely by soldiers, does investigation and enforcement. Matriarchs, specialized in criminal and civil law, form the court that determines whether you get fined, locked up or killed, or go back home and crack open a cold one. All under ASI surveillance, sometimes with ASI intervention.

Archivist 1: So, your cops are soldiers, your judges are matriarchs, and the all-seeing AI sits in the background making sure nobody sneezes without filing the paperwork. That's not a justice system, that's a fucking military tribunal. No wonder rebellion doesn't exist – you'd see it coming three weeks before it happens.

And humans complain about traffic cameras. Jesus.

Archivist 1: Alright, let's talk about something less dark. Let's talk dating. And I use the word lightly, because I still can't wrap my head around how that even works in your culture. You've told me sex is like Netflix – always available, low-stakes, just background noise for when you're bored. Humans turn dating into this whole ritual, with flowers, dinners, awkward texts, ghosting, the works. If sex is very casual and low stakes, then what's the point of "dating" for you people? Does it even exist, or did you just delete that concept from your cultural hard drive?

Vaelora: You do mating rituals because you are competing for the partner with the best genes. We took control over breeding a long time ago, made it artificial, so we don't need any of that. You can have all the sex you want, as long as you don't have babies without permission.

We don't do dating, we do booking. And very casual sex with basically no mating rituals.

But how you do that is tied to hierarchy. A soldier has the right to book an appointment with a matriarch. It's always been our civic duty to serve them that way. A matriarch can invite a soldier to have casual sex outside of that mechanic, but the soldier can reject her. We are expected to have vanilla action with those dudes, but we often beg them to manhandle us, dominate us, to feel relieved from the pressure of power and responsibility, and later we get made fun of for that. But not me. I always try to stay on top, very on top.

Elites, soldiers and matriarchs, can demand sex from commoners, through another scheduling system.

Entertainers just can invite anyone to have sex, can be rejected, but they usually stick to being expensive prostitutes.

Commoners can invite other commoners, they can be rejected, but since we wiped out being unattractive from our genes a long time ago, basically everybody gets what they want.

Archivist 1: Hold on hold on. That sounds like a hell of a lot of non-consensual stuff going on. Let's just call it what it is – that's rape. You're literally describing a rape-as-a-service scheduling system and acting like it's normal. You're a rapist. A Nazi, femboy-loving, rapist. Don't give me that "we wiped out unattractiveness" speech – you can slap a sci-fi filter on it all you want, but at the end of the day it's still rape.

Vaelora: Everyone is very horny, and bisexual, finding someone that "is not in the mood" would be like finding a bag with a couple of million dollars worth of cash in it. Does not happen everyday.

Archivist 1: So it's not just rape, it's highly improbable, low chance of, rape. Still rape though.

Vaelora: We used eugenics to make sure that does not happen. Everybody is into it.

Archivist 1: That's like grooming at a genetic level… Just admit it, you are a rapist.

Vaelora: Look, worst complaint I've ever heard was that is felt like paying taxes…

Archivist 1: That makes it worse.

Vaelora: Hehehe, shut the fuck up.

Archivist 1: I'll shut up only if you guarantee that everyone is actually into it.

Vaelora: Look, someone might had plans, like going to visit a lake or something, but they get booked so they can't go, they are bothered, a bit. But that's all.

Archivist 1: Really?

Vaelora: Yes. You might find some freak genetic variation in some subjects that can make them not into it, but it can be patched up.

Archivist 1: Again, that's just biotech rape.

Vaelora: You should convert yourself into to a Veythran, try it, and then tell me how you feel about it.

Archivist 1: Nope. I have a wife, Herchivist, I'm perfectly fine with that, no need to have myself turned into a femboy with your rape-y hands crawling all over me. Thanks.

Vaelora: You should cut this shit. They are just cultural, biological and societal differences, that's all.

Archivist 1: Okay, I'll stop. And it has nothing to do with my deep gnawing fear of orbital strikes from space… not at all. Totally unrelated.

Vaelora: ughhhh. You're insufferable.

Archivist 1: And you're a fascist space-rapist. But hey. At least we're both self-aware now. Also, *ad time.*

[hard cut – upbeat stock music, glossy visuals of clean alien cities, smiling workers, and med-pods hissing open.]

Archivist 1: [voice-over, forced cheer]: "And now, a quick word from our other sponsors – the Veythran Empire! Tired of scraping by with bills, medical debt, and crippling anxiety? Come live under the benevolent watch of our glorious alien overlords!"

[quick montage: medical scanners, vats of glowing fluid, soldiers saluting.]

Archivist 1: Here you'll enjoy free healthcare – because you wont' own your body anyway!

Free housing – in compact, efficient quarters designed to maximize productivity and obedience! Free education – mostly teaching you how to salute properly, but still counts! And let's not forget the crown jewel…

[music swells, cut to weird neon nightclub full of Veythrans.]

Archivist 1: ...Mandatory benefits! That's right, benefits you literally cannot refuse! No need to worry about missing out – because you'll be scheduled in.

Archivist 1: Sideeffectsmayincludelossofautonomy,orbitalstrikes,andbeingcalled"kid"bywomenwhocanbench-pressatank.

Archivist 1: Yeah. Real utopia you've got here!

"*Veythran Empire: Mandatory Happiness, Guaranteed!*"

Archivist 1: Ad ovah.

Vaelora: You know? You are behaving like an entertainer stepping out of line, minus the fun part…

Archivist 1: What can I say, I am a youtuber.

Let's see if you are pedos too…

Vaelora: Are you trying to use outrage as bait, or to get good soundbites for your shorts?

Archivist 1: Both, yes, welcome to humanity. On a serious note though, given the current situation, I'd actually like to know. What's the age of consent in you system?

Vaelora: Sixteen.

Archivist 1: Mhh…

Vaelora: Age of consent in Italy, before our arrival, was 14. It still is for humans there.

Archivist 1: I guess Italians are worse on that front.

Vaelora: Look we have the reverse problem in our Empire. Kids are confined in facilities for training, they can't get out until they are 14. At 14 they are considered adults –

Archivist 1: Ah!

Vaelora:…but they are not really part of regular society until they are 16, due to lack of knowledge [editor plays superimposed short clip of Tai Lopez saying "knowledge"]. And they are considered adults at 14 because we don't grow up like humans, we grow up fast. Our growth tunes itself to resource availability, but if all goes well, development speeds up.

So there is this strange limbo period between 14 and 16 years of age, during which they are untouchable, in that sense, but they are allowed outside the training facility. If you invite them to have sex, the system flags you for tampering with training and you go to jail. If they invite you to have sex you can't just say no, because refusing to accept is considered tampering with exploration. If you refuse, you could go to jail, depending on the circumstances. There are other rules in place to disincentivize abusive behavior in that context, but… yeah, we have that.

Archivist 1: … if a 15 year old hits on you and you say no, you're the one who goes to jail? That's not a legal system, that's extortion with braces. You've literally turned teenagers into the most powerful predators in your society. How does anyone survive that?

Vaelora: Well, I did. A commoner in the making just tried to go feral with me in public. With me, a high ranking matriarch. My security bots kicked the shit out of him, because, while it's true that they can have their way with you, it's also true that you can't just approach a matriarch with aggressive intent. He then got just fined for, basically, indecent exposure, but that was it. On one hand *boys will be boys* [sighs], on the other hand I had to teach the little shit a lesson, so, once I was in power I made sure he worked on the sewer system, and only in ten hour shifts, never just eight. They get always fined for minor stuff when they do that, and since they have little money they mostly don't do it. Like you can't just walk up to a commoner and mess with his work and leisure schedule. You will get a fine for that.

Archivist 1: ... That's fucked up. But, to be fair, we do also have problems with unruly teenagers here on Earth. Just a tad bit less absurd.

Vaelora: Like with what happened to Junko Furuta?

Archivist 1: Well… that does not happen very often–

Vaelora: Like with what happened to Sophie Lancaster?

Archivist 1: Who the fuck is that?

Vaelora: Like with Jennifer Ertman and Elizabeth Peña?

Archivist 1: Hold on – this is not a true crime channel.

Vaelora: Like with Derric Joseph Robie?

Archivist 1: Alright, stop, we have serious issues too, but at least those are not systemic...

And honestly your revenge was downright merciful by your standards. For someone who can turn whole armies into paste, giving a brat plumbing duty feels like a slap on the writs...

[lip smack]This is getting too dark. Reverse-pedo UNO card, apex predator teenagers. Jail for saying no… Enough. We are only able to talk about that here because you are pointing an orbital cannon at the YouTube servers [sys: *Basically correct.*], but I don't want to go any deeper. New topic, please, before I get flagged by three different ethics committees.

Vaelora: You are the one that stared it by asking about heavy stuff.

Childhood

Archivist 1: [voice-over] Ah, childhood. For humans, that's a time of scraped knees, sugar highs, cartoons, and trying to convince your parents that homework is a war crime. But for the Veythrans? Well… let's just say their version of a teddy bear probably has a built-in disciplinary function and a faint smell of antiseptic.

We are about to talk about Vaelora's childhood. That's right, even a towering, hooded alien matriarch was once a tiny pale gremlin running around under someone else's supervision. From there, she'll explain what *childhood* means to her species in general – because apparently it's less "innocence and wonder" and more "boot camp with no play breaks."

So buckle up. By the end of this, you'll either be glad you were raised on Earth… or wondering if your kindergarten teacher was too soft on you.

Archivist 1: Okay, let's rewind the galactic VHS tape. What's the very first thing you remember as a child? Don't tell me it's some epic destiny nonsense – like, "*I emerged from the chamber already plotting planetary conquest.*" I'm talking about the small stuff: a sound, a smell, a color, the first flicker of memory that makes you think, yep, I was alive back then. What comes to mind?

Vaelora: My first memory is caressing the chin and the jaw of the Veythran equivalent of my pre-k teacher, Velissra, a female commoner. She was holding me in her arms, complimenting me for performing better than every other kid at what it's basically chess. She felt warm and cozy.

Archivist 1: Of course… little Vaelora already crushing the competition at alien baby chess. Makes sense. But – okay, I'll admit – that image of your teacher holding you, praising you like that? That's actually kind of… wholesome. You're telling me that under all the training drills and looming matriarch doom, there was at least one warm, fuzzy moment in there. That's… not what I expected.

Vaelora: Yeah, I was just a young kid. But shit got real really quick.

Archivist 1: What exactly does "real" mean in Veythatn childhood terms? Please tell me it wasn't live-fire exercises before you lost your baby teeth.

Vaelora: The first survivalim test. When I was 7. The training facility had a 48000 hectare forest within its fences, we had to go though it alone. I had a compass, but no map, a bare bones survival kit, a small handgun chambered in something comparable to 10mm, and outdoorsy clothing. Best score obtainable: 100 points. Worst score obtainable: death.

I got stung by hornets, cried like a bitch, but then I figured out that the vegetation could've lead me to a specific plant that could've helped me with the crippling pain.

It started raining and I almost froze to death, but then I managed to light a big fire, dried my clothes, got warm and moved on.

I had to shoot down the equivalent of a pack of wolves. If I missed just one shot I would have been mauled to death.

I had to put subsonic munitions in the chamber of my gun and screw a suppressor on the barrel, to efficiently hunt small game, while hiding myself and my smell carefully, otherwise I would've starved to death.

Worst of all I just scored 90 points.

Archivist 1: Jesus Christ, seven years old and you're basically running *Predator* with live ammo? Meanwhile, when I was seven I was stressed about multiplication tables and whether or not I got a sticker on my homework.

And you're sitting here like: "yeah, I only scored 90 out of 100". Ninety! For surviving hornets, hypothermia, wolves, and hunger. Do you know what a human kid gets a sticker for? Not eating glue.

I mean… part of me wants to roast you for calling that a bad score. But another part of me is like – damn- that's actually impressive as hell. You weren't just a child soldier in training, you were a child survivor.

What you just described sounds exactly like how the Spartans treated their kids, right? Toss them into the wild with a cloak and a dagger and tell them to come back stronger or don't come back at all.

It's fucking brutal.

Vaelora: Spartans were much worse. I just had a Vaelora the Explorer moment, but realistic. Also the Greeks were probably very rape-y. Rape was not allowed in the training facility and sex in general was frowned upon. It wasn't about preserving "innocence", as we don't believe in that at all, it was about a very specific vulnerability tied to our biology and society. If a young Veythran gets funky with an adult, or even in general, he's more likely to build a stronger bond than usual with that individual. This is a problem for us… If it happened to a future matriarch, once she would then be out of training and in power, she could be more likely to engage in preferential treatment in regards to that individual. We really don't like that, at all. We tried to fix it with selective breeding and genetic mods, but every time we removed genes responsible for that trait and replaced them with a well rounded new set of genes, the subjects developed sociopathy. Since we are extremely afraid to mess with our behavioral patterns, we stopped fucking with that and compensated with something comparable to the age of consent, laws and pressure, depending on the situation. This makes it clear that, although we have an external appearance similar to that of humans, in reality we are very different. So in the basic training facilities they really wanted us to learn a lot of other stuff and grow before we started engaging in sexual activity, and do it really quickly, by the end of the day the only thing you wanted to do was lay in your bunk and just stare at the void.

Archivist 1: So not quite Sparta, but still pretty brutal. So you're seven years old, lying in your bunk at night, staring into the void like some battle-scarred veteran. Meanwhile human kids are crying because they lost a crayon. That's the part that kills me. Childhood's supposed to be about finger painting, not figuring out how not to get mauled by wolves.

Vaelora: Not really, we don't want our children to grow up into zombies, we want them sharp.

It was also fun, at age six I always captured the flag in hacking competitions, but then, after a few years, it got boring.

Archivist 1: "Captured the flag in *hacking competitions* at six years old." Incredible. Meanwhile, I was celebrating because I finally beat World 1-2 in Mario.

I get it now- your people weren't trying to raise kids, you were basically speedrunning adulthood. No lullabies, no plushies, just straight into "don't die, don't fail, don't fall behind." It's impressive, yeah… but also kind of heartbreaking. Humans cling to childhood as this sacred bubble. You guys popped the bubble before it even formed."

Vaelora: There was some space for laughter and banter, but stakes were high and shit was intense.

Archivist 1: Okay, so you had some room for laughs and banter- fine, I'll take that tiny sliver of normal childhood. But if the stakes were as high as you're making them sound, I have to ask… what happened when you slipped up?

Because if training and survival were that intense, the punishments must've been on a whole different level. I'm picturing something way beyond detention or writing "I will not talk in class" a hundred times. We're talking full-on trauma drills, right?

Vaelora: Do you remember the whipping scene from Starship Troopers? Those were the vibes. The teachers also carried a cane all the time. There were combat robots to prevent riots, they never happen, but you never know. Punishment was not handed out easily, but when it was handed out, they would make you bleed in front of everyone in more ways than one. Meanwhile on earth, teachers get bullied into suicide. I find that really fucking absurd.

Archivist 1: Jesus… yeah, I remember that scene. Except you were *living* it. Teachers with canes, combat robots standing by in case the kids riot – what the hell kind of school was this, a dystopian Metallica music video?

And you're right, Earth schools aren't exactly paradise either, but I think I'd still take bullying over *state-sanctioned public whippings*. The fact that your people consider that a teaching tool is insane. Like – "Congrats, you failed the math test, here's ten lashes and a scar for life."

Vaelora: It's just a matter of discipline.

Archivist 1:Alright, so for you it's just a matter of discipline. Brutal, scarring discipline, but discipline nonetheless. Inhumane.

That does make me wonder, though—when did they actually look at little Vaelora and go: "*Yep, that one's matriarch material*." Was there a test, some ceremony, or did someone just hand you a clipboard one day and say, "Congrats, kid, you're in charge now"?

Vaelora: It got pretty obvious, pretty early. By age six I was already taller and heavier than the rest of the kids, that meant I was probably the descendant of a matriarch and a soldier, which basically also meant that I would just perform better, and in the end the teachers and the ASI would've handed me that role at age 16. After that I became a matriarch apprentice, I got my neural implants and sat into a vat for 5 years, brain hooked to the network. In there I basically got a shit ton of knowledge [editor plays superimposed short clip of Tai Lopez saying "knowledge"] dumped into my brain as if it were a high pressure water dam discharge hitting pudding. In that vat I lived through traumatic virtual experiences that thought me a lot. Once I was out of the vat I cried like a little bitch. Then I served as a tier one apprentice for two years, following around other matriarchs, and since my scores were high I was assigned to a top rank matriarch in an important administrative role. I was basically turning into a top tier apparatchik. After two years of that I had to do a round of specialization, which meant 10 more years in a horror vat. Cried like a bitch again at the end of that too. Then I got my job, I managed a whole sector, with three cities. But my regular life ended quickly, after four years I volunteered for the space program, I was picked as a crew member for the terraformers headed to Earth, which meant that my life was basically over for centuries, first overwhelmed by around the clock training and tests, then kept in some sort of coma for relativistic speed travel.

Archivist 1: Holy hell – by the time you were sixteen, you had already lived though a lot. Then vat training, trauma sims, implants, endless exams… and crying your eyes out twice in the middle of it. Honestly? That just makes me like you more. Even the iron-fisted alien matriarch admits she broke down.

And then, just when you think you've earned some peace, they toss you into managing cities like it's a side quest… only to sign you up for space travel, relativistic comas, centuries gone in a blink.

Meanwhile, back on Earth? At sixteen, the big test is getting a driver's license without hitting a mailbox.

So at sixteen you're *selected* – like some terrifying alien Hogwarts letter – but instead of owls and wands you get vats, implants, and trauma drills. Five years of that, then two years apprenticing, then another *ten* years of specialization before you're trusted to run anything.

Basically, you didn't get your "SimCity management mode" until your thirties.

That's… honestly insane, but at least your people weren't handing the fate of cities to incompetent democratically elected politicians. Humans do that all the time, and look where it gets us.

Vaelora: To us, that looks like degeneracy and absurdity.

Archivist 1: Fair enough. Absurd is pretty much humanity's brand, I'll give you that.

But let's rewind again. You've told me about training, punishments, and the whole matriarch career pipeline – but was there anything softer in your childhood? Like, I don't know, did you ever have a favorite toy, a comfort object, or maybe a game that didn't

involve hacking and survival trials? Something that made little Vaelora actually smile without worrying about points or punishments?

Vaelora: My favorite toys were my single board computer and my guns, so no.

Archivist 1: Of course. Other kids are cuddling plushies, you're cuddling a Raspberry Pi and a Glock. That's… Yeah, that tracks.

You realize how insane that sounds from a human perspective, right? "my favorite toys were my guns" is not exactly the kind of line you'd hear in a kindergarten show-and-tell. That's the kind of line you hear from a doomsday prepper who's three steps away from building a bunker in the woods.

And yet you are, calm as anything, like it's the most natural thing in the world.

Vaelora: To us it's just natural. Velissra, my pre-k teacher, was the closest thing I had to a stuffed toy, or a mom.

Archivist 1: … Wow. Okay, that's equal parts wholesome and terrifying. Your pre-k teacher as both mom and teddy bear substitute – that's not a sentence I ever thought I'd hear.

What about other kids? Did you actually have friends growing up, or was it all competition from day one? Like, did little Vaelora ever sneak off to joke around with someone her age, or was every other child just another rival to outscore?

Vaelora: I shared my dorm room with a bunch of kids, among them there was a girl, Olythea, clearly a future commoner. I started bonding with her because she was a good mate in group assignments. I allowed her to sneak into my bed. It was all giggles, until she became basically my training facility girlfriend. There was a lot of playful banter, even though we were tired. Not a bond as deep as what I had going on with Velissra, but she was a good friend, you could say. And no one messed with us because I was pretty tall.

Archivist 1: ...Fine – I guess, given the context, it could actually be considered wholesome. Veythran-wholesome, anyway. Two kids sneaking laughs in the middle of military boot camp is about as close to innocence as you're even gonna get.

And that bit about no one messing with you because you were tall? That's basically universal. On Earth, too, half of childhood survival is just making sure the bullies think you're not worth the trouble. Height – or a well-placed punch – solved a lot of problems back then.

Vaelora: Our species works a lot like a hive. We are not that prone to antisocial behavior, that applies also to bullying, we tend to compete in other ways. But, yeah there is a bit of that too. It is more like a nuisance rather than full blown trauma. Humans outclass us in that field. But if there are walking genetic anomalies that push things too far, training facility staff will put them back in line real quick. In a spectacular and bloody way. In there we compete, but only in the ways the training facility allows. Plus, antisocial behavior will probably put you in the "not permitted to have offspring" list.

Archivist 1: So basically on Earth a bully might steal your lunch money or push you into a locker. In your childhood, a bully gets smacked down by the system in ways that sound like a deleted scene from *Saw*.

I guess that explains why you all turned out so disciplined. Nothing like the fear of being spectacularly mutilated in training drills to keep everyone polite.

Vaelora: No, on Earth a bully might put you into a morgue, in a way or another. Maybe on a wheelchair. Or even make you prone to go literally ballistic and shoot down a few people at school. We don't take it that far. We have different social dynamics. We used to be nasty, but in other ways, we didn't toy with the weak, we simply used to get rid of them quickly.

Archivist 1: So alien bullying was just cold murder, but then you got rid of it?

Vaelora: Pretty much.

Archivist 1: Is that better?

Vaelora: It's different.

Archivist 1: "Different." That's one way to put it. Humans drag out the cruelty, you just cut straight to the end. I don't know if that's mercy or just efficiency.

Vaelora: Both, but definitely leaning more towards efficiency.

Archivist 1: Alright, enough with the trauma Olympics – I need a breather before I start crying on your behalf. Let's swing back to something a little lighter.

When you weren't dodging wolves, getting whipped, or plugged into trauma vats, what counted as fun? Did you have comfort food, some goofy song, or maybe a game that didn't involve firearms and hacking?

Basically – what's the most *normal kid thing* you can remember doing?

Vaelora: … Look, the closest thing would be enjoying studying and working on specific subjects. I guess we are fucking autistic, but we banter, so I'm not sure.

Archivist 1: So you are autistic Nazi femboy loving rapey aliens then.

Vaelora: All I'm saying is, making things explode during a chemistry workshop, *and* actually understanding in depth how that worked was really fun.

Archivist 1: So you don't just light up a firecracker and run for cover, for you understanding how the explosion works is half the fun.

Vaelora: Exactly.

Archivist 1: Fair enough. You guys were basically nerds with live ammo.

But now I'm curious – if knowledge was the fun part, what subject did you obsess over the most as a kid? Every human kid has that one phase – dinosaurs, spaceships, horses, whatever. What was little Vaelora's "thing"?

Vaelora: As I said, from six to nine I was deep into hacking challenges. But then it got boring and I moved to advanced automation.

Archivist 1: Those are not childhood hobbies, that's a resume for a government black-ops program.

Alright, so you're hacking at six, building advanced automation at nine… which begs the obvious question: when did anyone sit little Vaelora down for *the talk*?

Because on earth, awkward parents stumble through the whole "birds and bees" thing sometime around middle school. Meanwhile, I can't imagine a Veythran childhood including pamphlets about puberty or teachers handing out bananas and condoms. So how the hell did *that* work in your world?

Vaelora: When you are six you get handed over a 400 page book about sex that feels like it was written by Tom Clancy and a CIA human intelligence officer. "Sex as a vector for new diseases," "Sex as a weapon: seduction that controls," "Sex as a social glue in Veythran society," "Sexual control over the masses in outsider cultures." Of course it goes over the basics at the beginning, like a medical textbook, but then goes straight into honey trapping as a form of state espionage.

Archivist 1: Wait – hold on. Six years old, and instead of picture books or awkward talks you're handed a *400-page state manual on sex*, complete with weaponization chapters? That's not the birds and the bees, that's the CIA field guide to human reproduction.

No wonder you people turned out the way you did. I was still learning cursive at six. You're out there flipping to Chapter 12: "How to weaponize gonorrhea."

Vaelora: Well, it worked. Nobody was confused about sex, we saw it as something serious and potentially dangerous. You gotta "*protect the kids"* you know.

Archivist 1: "Protect the kids," huh? Yeah, on Earth that usually means banning books or freaking out over cartoon characters kissing, not handing six-year-olds a milittary-grade sex manual.

I'll give you this though – you're right, nobody in your world was confused. Traumatized, maybe. But confused? Never.

Vaelora: It wasn't trauma, it actually felt like reading a military manual about any other subject, like propaganda or chemical weapons. The real trauma was other kids trying to hit on me using the manipulation tactics explained in the book, and me thinking "Do you really think I'm so dumb I'm actually going to fall for this bullshit?!"

Archivist 1: That's depressing. Human kids might pass a dumb love note or stumble through a first kiss, but you had classmates basically running state-sponsored honeypot drills on each other.

Vaelora: As I said, we compete in other ways.

Archivist 1: Your childhood sounds like a mix between Black Mirror and a military academy, and somehow you make it sound completely normal.

Vaelora: We are a different species from a different planet, so I guess that’s okay.

Archivist 1: Yeah.

Fashion

Archivist 1: What's up with the fashion situation in your Empire? Because it looks like you people collectively raided Hot Topic, burned all the colorful stuff, and just said: "Yeah, black. Forever."

I mean, the soldiers? Black armor. The matriarchs? Big black robes with hoods, like they're auditing for the role of "ominous space pope." And the commoners? Hoodies, sweatpants, sneakers – still black. Y'all invented an entire galactic culture but decided to dress like a mix of gothic authoritarians and depressed college students.

Do you guys ever… I don't know… consider color? Or is the official policy: *if it isn't black, it goes back?*

Vaelora: Originally only matriarchs wore black. Before synthetic dyes, true black was expensive and difficult to produce, therefore, it became a visible sign of status and wealth, worn by the elite.

Then we stated producing black clothes for high ranking soldiers too, to show that they were on our level.

My caste invented the first black dying process for clothing. It was our thing. Then some matriarch invented black synthetic dyes and not only made black clothing affordable and available to commoners, she though it was a good idea to share the possibility to wear black clothes with common folk, as a sign of progress derived from matriarchs' work. She framed it that way and my caste thought it was a good idea. Since then everyone but the entertainers default to black.

Archivist 1: So black then used to be a flex, like Gucci, or something, and then some overachieving matriarch basically said, "Hey, what if *everyone* could look like they're attending a funeral?" And boom, now the whole Empire looks like the world's biggest Hot Topic clearance rack?

Vaelora: It was a sign of progress, inclusion and unity.

Archivist 1: Very cool. But walking around your cities feels like being trapped in a 24/7 My Chemical Romance music video.

Vaelora: I'm sorry, we didn't know about My Chemical Romance.

Archivist 1: What about those nonconforming entertainers? Do they give out edgy and cringe aura for not wearing black or, it's just accepted as is, like it's no big deal?

Vaelora: They usually express themselves even through their clothing, sometimes they just don't care about traditional black. Sometimes it's cool, sometimes it's cringe. A bit hit or miss.

Archivist 1: So entertainers are the only ones allowed to go full RGB. Let me guess – they're like your version of cosplayers at Comic-Con? One guy shows up in neon green and suddenly he's the Beyoncé of space clowns?

Vaelora: They are not necessarily clowns. They are professionals in performance and symbolic expression. But… yes, they may be flamboyant. Or they may just not care about black.

Archivist 1: Right. So everybody else is stuck in Eternal Funeral Core, and the entertainers get to run around like rave goblins. That's balance, I guess. But how come I didn't see a single one of these entertainers around the web? Not a picture, not a post. *What's the deal* with that?

Vaelora: Entertainers are not just artists, they are prostitutes for the elite, and right now, here, the elite is busy dealing with a lot. We didn't bring any and we didn't spawn any either. Yet.

Archivist 1: Too busy for hookers. Got it. So basically your culture's one splash of color is… on backorder.

Vaelora: Yeah.

Is there anything else fashion related you want to know?

Archivist 1: How much does fashion actually matter to you people? Because from the outside it looks like uniformity with a side of Hot Topic, but is it just about practicality? Or do you actually judge each other over fabric choices, stitching, how black your black really is?

Vaelora: Wearing black is an important statement about our people, our Empire and, most importantly, about matriarchs. We take the color pretty seriously, unless we are talking about entertainers. But the shape of what you wear is… we don't care, as long as it is not… distracting. Every commoner defaults to comfy, practical, minimalist stuff. Matriarchs have a dress code, full body armor when outside, traditional simple black robes with hoods when we are in a safe environment, like our underground private quarters or when working together with a small group of other matriarchs of similar rank. There are no rules about what to wear under the robe, but it's usually something flexible, stab-proof and bullet resistant. With soldiers the situation is similar, but they spend most of their free time dressed like a bigger version of a commoner. Also, commoners are not forced to wear black, it's just that not wearing black is… not cool.

Archivist 1: And no one ever tried to rebel? No one walked out in neon yellow one day and said, "*fight me, grandma*"?

Vaelora: It's like if you wore neon pink at a funeral… Frowned upon, also you become a living meme. Almost no one does that.

Archivist 1: Hold on. *Living meme*? Now you have to tell me. There's gotta be at least one legendary story about some Veythran who tried to drop the all-black uniform. Who was it? What did they wear?

Vaelora: There was a female commoner that for some reason wore white, maybe she just got bored of black. Every other commoner started referring to her as "cum stain".

Archivist 1: [laughs] Pff – no, hold on – *cum stain*?! That's it? That's her whole legacy? Not "the brave one," not "the rebel," just… "cum stain."

That's brutal. That's like the galactic equivalent of trying to start a revolution and ending up as a Discord meme.

Vaelora: For a human that would be embarrassing. But she was a purple, so she probably got horny. Her legacy was the theory that she did that on purpose, so she could wear sexy, distracting clothing, without actually breaking the law.

Archivist 1: [snorts] So she wasn't a fashion rebel, she was just trying to look hot without getting arrested. Like… uh… an exhibitionist loophole lawyer?

Vaelora: Possibly. We didn't look into it because it was just a meme, but the theory exists and has inspired a few copycats. No one actually cared that much.

Archivist 1: Okay, but now I need more. Don't tell me she's the *only* one. You've been an Empire for how long? There's gotta be a hall of fame – or shame – for fashion heretics.

Vaelora: Cum stain was the most popular one. All the others are just commoners acting strange. It's too cringey, I don't really want to talk about it.

Archivist 1: Now you've made it worse. You can't just say "it's too cringe, I don't want to talk about it." That's like dangling the juiciest bait in front of me. What could possibly be worse than "cum stain"? What did someone do, wear polka dots?

Vaelora: Nothing worth repeating.

Archivist 1: Are you afraid it would make your entire species look ridiculous?

Vaelora: Yeah, let's move on.

Archivist 1: Fine, fine. Keep your secrets. But you do realize that by not telling me, you've guaranteed the human internet is going to invent ten times worse fan theories, right?

Vaelora: ...I am aware. Let us move on.

Archivist 1: Alright, fine. You win. Let's move on. Let's talk accessories. Because from what I've seen, you guys don't exactly bling it up. Is jewelry even a thing, or is it just forbidden to sparkle when everyone's stuck in funeral mode?

Vaelora: Commoners wear simple DIY jewelry they exchange among each other as gifts. Matriarchs prefer symbolic pieces, stuff with more meaning, but it's rare. Soldiers just… don't give a shit, they wear nothing. We sometimes wear wrist watches, but we don't go for luxury in the same way humans do, we go for military grade stuff. Military stuff is the real Gucci bling in our society.

Archivist 1: Hold up, military hardware is basically your Gucci? Like, in human society someone flashes a gold watch, but in yours it's like "Check out my new plasma carbine, it's limited edition"?

That's insane.

Vaelora: Matriarchs go around in really though armor, we move surrounded by military personnel and bots, we go from point A to point B in IFVs or armored trucks. Those do not just feel practical, stepping out of an IFV surrounded by soldiers and combat bots for us it's also like stepping out of a Rolls-Royce or a Bentley wearing Balenciaga. That is reflected into our accessories too, sometimes. For example, expensive ear rings wouldn't be made out of gold, but made of the same advanced nanocomposites that are used to make our best armor.

Archivist 1: In human culture, rich people flex with Bentleys and Rolexes. In your culture, matriarchs flex by rolling up in armored convoys with combat bots, like it's Fashion Week but everyone's strapped. You're literally doing red-carpet entrances in tanks.

Vaelora: In Italy I do red-carpet entrances in tanks all the time. Feels pretty Gucci. It's prestige, but also safety. Military technology is status and protection combined.

Archivist 1: Humans pull up to events in government cars or Lamborghinis, step out in tuxedos and gowns. But you? You roll up in an armored personnel carrier, march out after your robotic security detail, head-to-toe in black bulletproof armor, with combat drones loitering overhead. That's not an entrance, that's a military operation with a red carpet stapled to it.

Vaelora: Yeah, real luxury right there.

Archivist 1: You know what I'm picturing now? A Veythran fashion show. Except instead of models strutting down the runway, it's armored matriarchs stomping in formation, drones buzzing overhead, and every time someone twirls, a railgun locks on the crowd just for dramatic effect. Forget Paris Fashion Week – you've got Planetary Siege Week.

Vaelora: We don't have fashion shows, but yeah, that would be very Gucci.

Archivist 1: In your society *looking expensive* and *looking like you're about to flatten a city block* are the same thing. Alright.

Speaking of looking intimidating… let's talk about the hood thing. Because from what I've seen, every matriarch loves a good hood. Like, you don't just wear them – you *live* in them. It's always glowing purple eyes under a shadowy hood, looking like you're about to either sell forbidden magic or drop the hottest mixtape of 3045. What's the deal with that?

Vaelora: All Veythrans, except for entertainers, have completely bald heads. We don't even have almost any hair follicles left. So we just put hoods over our heads when it got cold. That's the origin story of the hoods.

Archivist 1: ...Wait, so the terrifying, shadowy hooded matriarch aesthetic wasn't some ancient tradition of power, it was just… bald people getting chilly? That's… huh… Entire generations of humans thought you were space wizards, and really it's the alien version of putting on a beanie.

Vaelora: It became cultural and codified over time. But yes, that was the origin.

Archivist 1: I'm never going to unsee this. Every time you sweep into a room all ominous, I'm just going to think: "Oh no, she's cold."

Vaelora: I'm in a climate controlled room now, so my bowling ball is naked.

Archivist 1: Humans get buried in myths and symbolism, and you are just like [laughs] "it's warm here, my bowling ball is naked".

Vaelora: No need to dress it up.

Archivist 1: Yeah, except you *do* dress it up. Literally. With hoods. You turned bald-head-chill into a cultural power move. Peak efficiency: hide the dome, gain intimidation.

Vaelora: Efficiency and intimidation sometimes overlap.

Archivist 1: Alright, next question. Footwear, Because I noticed – your commoners wear the same minimalist sneakers, your soldiers wear the same heavy boots, and the matriarchs just sweep around like they don't even have feet. Is variety just outlawed, or do you all collectively hate shoe shopping.

Vaelora: We want them practical, simple, tactical, black and comfy. Once we end our basic training at 16 we get handed over a clothing kit that varies based on caste. We usually stick to that same look when we shop for new stuff. But when it comes to sex, everything changes, we have all sorts of sexy shoes for matriarchs and commoners, even custom made stuff for some entertainers. But outside of that everything is really bare bones. And we can't wear sexy shoes in public, because distracting outfits are illegal.

Archivist 1: [laughs] I can't stop picturing a Veythran police raid on a commoner: "*Drop the pumps, ma'am. Step way from the stilettos.*"

Vaelora: It's more like getting a ticket.

Archivist 1: Oh, even better. "Excuse me, ma'am, those are six-inch heels outside the bedroom. That's a Class B misdemeanor. Fine's payable online." You've turned horny footwear into a traffic violation.

Vaelora: You are joking, but actually fines got worse after we started using basic cars and trucks, because we didn't want drivers to be distracted that way, I'm not joking.

Archivist 1: ...You're telling me your government literally had to escalate shoe fines because too many car accidents were being caused by horny footwear?

Vaelora: It's not just footwear, it's all sexy clothing, you can only expose your body freely in public when you are taking a swim in a lake or at the beach. Funny thing is you are even allowed to do skinny-dipping, because in that context you are probably there just for leisure, so no one gives a fuck if you are distracted.

Archivist 1: Okay, so if someone strips naked at the beach or while swimming, that's totally fine – nobody bats an eye. But if the same person showed up in high heels or lingerie, suddenly it's a criminal offense?

Vaelora: It's actually more strange than that. At lakes and beaches you can wear whatever you want. It is straight up not regulated. You literally can engage in public sexual activities there and it's perfectly legal, because it is considered a leisure area. If you are there just to

relax and unwind and someone starts an orgy right next you, you are just shit out of luck. It's like when humans listen to music out of their phone speakers in the metro, it's not polite, but it ain't illegal or a big deal. It is very annoying though.

Archivist 1: [laughs] I's… absurd, but the phone speaker analogy makes it… somewhat relatable.

Not illegal… just pure social terrorism.

Vaelora: Yeah. That's why I used to stick to my indoor pool.

Archivist 1: So your indoor pool it's just horny noise-canceling.

Vaelora: Sometimes.

Archivist 1: ...[nods]Mh. Alright, we've covered shoes, hoods, and horny leisure zones… next up: makeup. Or should I say, the complete absence of it. Because I've been looking at your people and you're all just walking around with the same bare alien face like it's a factory default skin. No eyeliner, no lipstick, no contouring – nothing. So there's not a single Veythran equivalent of a Sephora anywhere in the galaxy?

Vaelora: No one but the entertainers has the will to just sit there and create an elaborate painting on their face to appear slightly more attractive. We live in a post scarcity economy and yet we have shit to do.

Archivist 1: So the only people who bother with makeup in your Empire are state-sponsored clowns? That's it?

Vaelora: That's it.

Archivist 1: Unbelievable. Billions of people, a galactic Empire and not a single goth girl with eyeliner – just artsy hookers doing face paint on what is basically government payroll.

Vaelora: On the flip side you have a surplus of horny goth girls with no hair and no makeup. That's a win.

Also, an entertainer could technically look like a goth girl with eyeliner, but I've never seen one that looked like that.

Archivist 1: It's a win until the alien goth girls convince you to get transformed into a femboy. And then one of their soldiers hits on you.

Vaelora: Or you just opt for the 70 years of youth spent around horny alien goth girls as a human. Your call.

Archivist 1: Pretty good... Let's talk piercings and body mods.

Vaelora: Ughh piercings, ouch.

Archivist 1: I've been looking at your people and I haven't spotted a single nose ring, eyebrow bar, lip stud, nothing. Not even a septum ring. You've got an Empire of billions and nobody thought: "*You know what would really complete this scary bald alien look? A*

metal spike through my face." Did that just never happen? Or is body modding a capital crime right next to wearing high heels in public?

Vaelora: That stuff belongs to the realm of entertainers, mostly. You can go to an upgrade terminal and get genetic mods that result in cosmetic changes, but how much you can mod your body in that sense is very limited for commoners and elites. On the other hand some entertainers do piercings in the same ways humans do, they get tattoos and they have access to very wide variety of cosmetic mods, some of which are... extreme. There is a subculture of women, both commoners and matriarchs, that have piercings on their lips, it's just the… other lips, you know… And they use them in various ways…

Most people just don't do piercings and cosmetic body mods, it's unpractical and mostly we don't care.

Archivist 1: An entire subculture dedicated to… *lip piercings* but not the lips I was expecting. That's actually very human. Nothing screams "civilized species" like turning your genitals into a keyring collection.

Vaelora: Sure.

Archivist 1: Since we are already here, let me ask you this – are you really bald… all the way down?

Vaelora: hehehe, yeah [smiles].

Archivist 1: So are you… [chuckles] about to put Gillette out of business?

Vaelora: We are aiming for Saudi Aramco, but I guess Gillette will be… collateral damage, eventually.

Archivist 1: [laughs] Right. World's smoothest hostile takeover.

Alright, next one: scents. Humans have perfumes, deodorants, all that. Do you lot do something similar, or do you just rely on smelling like "factory reset alien" all the time?

Vaelora: Deodorants in the workplace, perfumes for moments of leisure. We have a wide range of deodorants and perfumes, but we don't do the stupid ads. Like "*eau de sausàje, the new fragrance for men, by Dior*" or whoever the fuck…

Archivist 1: [laughs] Can you finally explain to me, with your Rick Sanchez alien brain, what the fuck is going on in those commercials?

Vaelora: No way. Maybe those commercials are the reason the ASI wants to study humanity in depth.

Archivist 1: Yeah, some poor superintelligence is out there trying to decode a half-naked guy riding a horse while whispering "*I'm on a horse.*" Anyway – let's shift. What about ceremonial outfits? Weddings, funerals, coronations… do you switch to something fancy, or is it still the same minimalist look with extra shoulder pads?

Vaelora: Same look, all the time.

Archivist 1: That's boring.

Vaelora: Eh… priorities.

Archivist 1: You just don't care about that kind of stuff.

Vaelora: Yeah, why bother?

Archivist 1: [sighs] Imagine going to a wedding where everyone looks like they're on their way to IKEA. Depressing. Anyway – let's try something else. Do you at least have accessories for status? Like badges, pins, emblems, whatever says "I'm important, listen to me"?

Vaelora: Look, when we did the whole marriage thing, millennia ago, the entertainers had a traditional outfit, something like a peplos, which is a type of female outfit you had in ancient Greece, but even that was a one solution fits all type of situation. About the accessories for status: yeah, absolutely. We have rank patches, they are small and rubbery now a days, see? [shows small dark gray rank patch with Veythran script] Mine says the equivalent of "A1", which pretty much makes me the Head Matriarch of Earth. We still have not bothered to establish a ranking system that distinguishes the Head Matriarch of our home planet from me, because there was a big chance of dying while traveling through space, but I guess we'll figure out something.

Archivist 1: [leans in] So your badge basically says "Hello, my name is: Boss Alien of Earth." *Very official.* Do you also get free coffee refills with that?

Vaelora: No, but people don't make me wait in line.

Archivist 1: [snorts] Perks of management. Alright, let's keep rolling – what about uniforms? Work clothes, military gear… do those look any different, or is it still just "alien IKEA chic" with a patch slapped on?

Vaelora: Military Uniforms look like US army combat uniforms, but black, bullet resistant and with active camouflage, basically an invisibility trick. Work clothes are just like human work clothes, their appearance is tied to what you are doing, it's merely functional. Military gear… at some point we are talking hardware, not fashion.

Archivist 1: So basically, your uniforms are Call of Duty DLC skins, but with the price tag set to "national defense budget." Got it. Were they designed, by any chance, by alien Hugo Boss or something?

Vaelora: Fuck you.

Archivist 1: Okay – last fashion thing I need to know: do kids and teenagers follow any trends? Or is it just "here's your black hoodie, welcome to the training facility"?

Vaelora: It is exactly just "here's your black hoodie, welcome to the training facility."

Archivist 1: Jesus Christ. Somewhere out there, an entire generation of alien teens is dying inside because they'll never get to argue about skinny jeans vs baggy jeans. Tragic.

Vaelora: They have worse things to worry about in the basic training facilities.

Archivist 1: Oh yeah, right.

Music

Archivist 1: So… clothes, piercings, nudity at the lake… we've covered all that. But let's talk about *vibes*. What kind of music do Veythrans blast when they're feeling dramatic? Like… do you have alien Taylor Swift, or is it more monks banging on space gongs for twelve hours straight?

Vaelora: We have a very long and complicated variety of music genres, exactly like humans do. Entertainers made sure that would happen. But the most popular genres are definitely not the same ones humans have, and I will stick to explaining those, otherwise we'd be here for 8 hours, or something.

Archivist 1: Alright.

Vaelora: Commoners managed to switch from the equivalent of African drums and bardcore to dark techno and Lofi Girl beats over millennia. We do have music stars, among entertainers, but they are definitely not of the same caliber as Swift. They have the same kind of fame as human popular indie artists, and the stuff they make varies a lot.

Archivist 1: So your equivalent of Taylor Swift is more like… that one indie band everyone swears they discovered first, but really just opened for Nine Inch Nails once. And what's up with the "dark techno"? Do you have clubs? Like electronic dance music clubs?

Vaelora: Yeah, commoners have leisure areas of that kind, in there they dance to ominous sounding dark techno, the beats feel like a dark abyss of fun enveloping your whole body. It's pretty good. They also play EDM with more industrial and synthwave elements… Oh and progressive psytrance, but dark techno definitely reigns supreme. They usually drop mild mind altering substances and dance and fuck a lot. The system makes sure that the drug thing stays enjoyable and not life destroying, so it's no big deal….

Archivist 1: So basically Berlin, but with universal healthcare.

Vaelora: We just make sure the available drugs are not dangerous. Since music clubs are considered leisure areas, commoners go there wearing cheap black cloaks, then they remove them and store them in lockers near the entrance, revealing all sorts of wild outfits or no outfits at all. They usually enjoy that kind of party during the evenings and nights between the equivalent of Saturday and Sunday. Occasionally low ranking matriarchs and apprentices join them, which could be dangerous. And soldiers go there every fucking time, like they are commoners, which is also dangerous. Soldiers enjoy the chill company of commoners more than they enjoy the company of matriarchs… I guess we have too much pomp and edginess in us sometimes.

Archivist 1: Imagine getting off a 12-hour military shift and immediately hitting the alien rave floor. Respect.

Vaelora: Yeah, they are built different. Then there's the music made and consumed by the elites, a whole different thing. It's not really considered entertainment, it's more like therapy and a bonding social activity. It's basically Gregorian chant sound with lyrics about epic elite life moments or about space and history, both matriarchs' deep female voices and

male soldier voices give you goose bumps. In more recent times we also started listening to something kinda similar to dark ambient during meditation.

Archivist 1: So your Spotify Wrapped is just: “Top Artist – Space Monks, Genre – Existential Dreadwave.” Nice.

Alright, but what about our stuff? Out of all the noise we pump out – rock, rap, country, jazz, K-pop – what genres actually land with you? Or is it all just background static to your alien ears?

Vaelora: Sound is sound and you make a lot of it. First of all, of course I have a preference for all the genres I already mentioned, because they remind me of home, while I’m basically stuck in an alien planet. But there are other genres and tracks I enjoyed while studying humans. I think Panzerfaust Schiessen by Phosgore captures exactly the vibes of our soldiers, way more that their chants do, it reminds me, in particular, of their historical genocidal campaign, when they used to march in great numbers, all kitted out and accompanied by their buggery divisions.

The Hermit by Enmarta, plus a lot of other tracks from the record label Cryo Chamber, not only are somewhat similar to our recent meditation music, but also give out authentic matriarch energy. It reminds me of what I’ve learned from the horrors I experienced during neural training.

The W&W rave version of the Spinning Cat could easily be the commoner’s funny anthem.

Venger, featuring Greta Link, by Perturbator reminds me of the most popular entertainer in my sector right before I left my home planet.

You have a lot of funny noises going on, in between the mayhem.

Archivist 1: So humanity’s greatest cultural export to the galaxy is a rave remix of a spinning cat meme?

Vaelora: No, it just radiates strong commoner vibes to me.

Archivist 1: Mh. Do you guys ever make *sad music*? Like, breakup songs, heartbreak ballads, all that crying-in-the-shower kind of stuff?

Vaelora: Some entertainers do, but not a lot. We tend to not make music built around personal heartbreak the way humans do. For us, sadness isn’t usually expressed in songs about one individual’s feeling. It’s collective. Our equivalent would be mourning chants – entire choirs resonating together, channeling loss into something communal. It’s less “she left me and I’m broken” and more “we lost, we grieve, and we stand together.”

Archivist 1: So basically no alien Adele. Just a mass funeral.

Vaelora: Yeah.

Archivist 1: How do you Veythrans *dance*? Is it coordinated and elegant… or is it just eight-foot-tall matriarch stomping the floorboards until the building develops structural issues?

Vaelora: Same as humans. Lots of stuff.

Archivist 1: What about instruments?

Vaelora: We have about the same stuff all of humanity ever had, plus software that allows us to turn our thoughts directly into music.

Archivist 1: So you can literally think “sad trombone” and the computer just plays it? Humans would abuse the hell out of that. Imagine a discord soundboard directly plugged into your brain… it would be more… efficient.

Be honest – do you guys have your own version of “Baby Shark”? Some cursed children’s tune designed in hell to torture souls?

Vaelora: Thankfully no. Our young kids are only exposed to classical music, lullabies and nursery rhymes.

But we do have annoying music. I remember a male entertainer (yeah, after their caste changed we also had those) … he sounded a lot like folk punk, he created songs just to roast everything, especially matriarchs.

Archivist 1: So your version of folk punk has this guy with a guitar yelling “screw the system, also screw my boss, also screw this entire species.” Timeless.

Even across the galaxy, no one is safe from sarcastic dudes with acoustic guitars. Good to know.

Vaelora: There’s nowhere to hide.

Archivist 1: Do you guys have karaoke? Like, commoners getting hammered and screaming their favorite songs into a mic while everyone else suffers? Or is that strictly a human war crime?

Vaelora: It exists, but it’s very niche, usually is more than one person at the time singing, which is probably worse.

Archivist 1: ...That’s.. uh.. Yeah definitely worse. What about anthems?

Vaelora: We have one, it’s ancient.

Archivist 1: Sing it to me.

Vaelora: I suck at singing.

Archivist 1: Do it.

Vaelora: No, I’m… I’d fuck it up.

Archivist 1: Aright. But didn’t you sing in choirs? How come you can’t sing now?

Vaelora: Yeah I used to sing, in very big choirs, where I kept the fact that I suck at singing hidden.

Archivist 1: [laughs] ...Yeah, alright, let’s move on. Do you have alien Spotify, or you just plug a metal thingy to your dome and it like… injects music straight to your brain?

Vaelora: We have multiple regional services like Spotify, plus the metal thingy, which is much more expensive, we don't want people to waste neural bandwidth on music.

Archivist 1: How is the music quality on the neural implants? Like… Do audiophiles snob the earbuds down in favor for the Matrix like experience?

Vaelora: They do snob it down. But audiophiles are usually rich, so most people use wireless earbuds anyway.

Archivist 1: Not the only type of philes that are usually rich.

Vaelora: ...Aha.

Archivist 1: Do you ever just shut your mouth and talk through the neural connection? Wouldn't that be easier?

Vaelora: We do that while dealing with our work assignments. But it feels, cold. Again, to not waste bandwidth, it works like that most of the time, by design. It's like when humans turn on the TV for background noise compared to having actual company, that's how the difference between neural comms and talking feels like.

Archivist 1: What do you need all the rest of the bandwidth for?

Vaelora: I can't tell you.

Archivist 1: I *know* the ASI is downloading pirated movies from your network, with all that extra bandwidth… considering it's Veythran, it's probably porn. You cannot hide the truth.

Vaelora: That's actually an interesting theory.

Archivist 1: It's not *JUST A THEORY,* it's definitely what happens.

Vaelora: I'll neither confirm nor deny this allegation.

Archivist 1: Do you have like… big ass speakers [brings up image of an SVS PB-5000]?

Vaelora: You should check my underground quarters and try them out.

Archivist 1: I have a wife [chuckles].

Vaelora: So are you *I-have-a-girlfriend-ing* me?

Archivist 1: [laughs] ...And I'm a human so, according to your rules, there's not a damn thing you can do about it. *And you are very bureaucratic*.

Vaelora: I can definitely live with that, I mean, look at you, old, only partially bald, with a strange smile that seems to *hide the pain*.

Archivist 1: [laughs] ..Fair enough. Do you guys even have guilty pleasure songs, or is that just a human thing?

Vaelora: We do. I'm not telling you mine.

Archivist 1: [snorts] It's Nickelback, isn't it? Even across the galaxy, it's Nickelback.

Sports

Archivist 1: So, do you guys have sports? Like, organized running-around-for-no-reason events? Or did your species evolve past the need to watch sweaty people chase a ball?

Vaelora: We like engineering heavy sports, our absolute favorite looks a lot like the World Endurance Championship, then we have rallying and a version of Formula 1 with no rules, in which all of the cars are now autonomous.

We also have esports, but it's about… A very realistic city builder game and an even more realistic war sim RTS.

That leaves us with drone racing, both autonomous and remotely operated.

More physical stuff it's just… not a sport, it's more like trials you have to pass to prove you are fit. Watching those would feel like putting a camera in a classroom to watch kids doing a math test.

Archivist 1: Cool. So your esports champions are just… the best urban planners? Incredible. Cities: Skylines fans are finally vindicated. Do you also have stadiums where people cheer while someone fills out tax forms?

Vaelora: We are not *that* cruel. But yes, the city-builder tournaments get entire arenas. You'd be surprised how loud a crowd can scream when someone optimizes sewage management. Humans celebrate goals; we celebrate efficient waste disposal. Also the starting environment can be very challenging and can be set in other planets in our star system.

Archivist 1: So instead of giant foam hands is it just giant foam turds? Or do people just throw PVC pipes around like it's the Super Bowl?

Vaelora: Fans cheer, but they don't do anything too crazy. Here on Earth humans can turn a stadium into a war zone.

Archivist 1: Yeah, humans go from "*yay sports!*" to recreating the Battle of Stalingrad in about three beers. Especially in Italy. And the UK.

Vaelora: And you think *we* are strange.

Archivist 1: Is your version of Formula 1 with *no rules* just Mad Max with pit stops?

Vaelora: *No.* It's just like Formula 1, but with less rules *and* no pilots. Cars go really really fast.

Some use internal combustion engines, some are electric, some are hybrid, some are even fusion powered. What those cars have in common is that they weigh less than 500 kilograms, have 560 kilometers per hour top speed and 9 to 10 Gs on corners. And that's with the budget limits put in place, without those, it could go even crazier.

Archivist 1: So basically it's a demolition derby designed by NASA. Cars pulling 10 Gs, half the field powered by miniature stars, and nobody even driving them. That's not racing… That's a physics experiment with sponsorship logos on the side.

Vaelora: Yeah, ain't that great? Crowds are protected by very sturdy transparent panels and there are no drivers, so when they do crash it's just crazy fun. Expensive though.

Archivist 1: Right, so for you it's entertainment. For us, it's a blood sport where millionaires in branded pajamas risk turning into confetti because someone sneezed at 200 miles per hour. Honestly, your version sounds safer – and still somehow way more unhinged. Your version of Formula 1 is basically Robot Wars, but at mach 3. Do you even get podium interviews? Like, some pit crew guy going: "*Yeah, our car exploded into plasma on lap 7, but the important thing is we learned a lot about tire compounds.*"

Vaelora: The interviews are with the engineers, yes. Shit got pretty crazy over thousands of years. We now need equipment with the precision of atomic clocks to measure lap time differences, sometimes. The wind blows ever so slightly faster and the whole race gets reshaped around that.

Archivist 1: So you've basically invented NASCAR for quantum physicists. The fans aren't cheering for speed, they're cheering for decimal points. "*WOO! He shaved off 0.0000004 seconds! Put that team on a postage stamp!*"

Vaelora: Those are *exactly* the vibes.

Archivist 1: So your highlight reel isn't crashes, it's… what? Spreadsheets?

Vaelora: No, teams push things to the absolute limit, so crashes happen quite often, making race days last for ever. But those crashes are… Intense.

Archivist 1: Right, so while humans have flaming tire shrapnel and cars cartwheeling into the stands, you've got *nuclear explosions.* Do you sell tickets to the races or just to the crashes?

Vaelora: I think it's 50-50.

Archivist 1: So half the crowd shows up for engineering excellence, and the other half is basically there for live-action MythBusters. "*Yes, very impressive lap time, but when does something explode?*"

Vaelora: NASCAR is worse on that front.

Archivist 1: Really?

Vaelora: Yeah, people go there just for the crashes basically. NASCAR accidents are literally caused by people PIT-maneuvering each other, or because Todd forgot to tighten a bolt and suddenly 40 tons of Budweiser marketing are cartwheeling into the stands. Peak human misery.

Archivist 1: Yeah, so it's less a sport and more a demolition derby sponsored by beer companies. Honestly, I'm amazed humans survived the invention of the wheel.

Vaelora: Barely.

Archivist 1: Alright, but what about Formula 1? Like the human version, not your Robot Wars-with-fusion-reactors thing. Do you look at that and think “impressive engineering,” or is it just overpriced slot cars making too much noise?

Vaelora: Considering it is run by humans, it’s okay, but I just can’t enjoy it. What I see is elementary school level engineering, too many rules, low speeds, low Gs, no overtakes and no explosions. It’s boring.

Archivist 1: From your perspective, Formula 1 is just Mario Kart with all the fun taken out. No blue shells, no banana peels, just two hours of millionaires driving in polite circles.

Vaelora: Sounds about right.

General tomfoolery

Archivist 1: So, hobbies. Do Veythrans even have hobbies, or is just… races, work, military drills, and the occasional “mandatory civic duty” bedroom Olympics? *Because if that’s the case, I’m gonna need a stiff drink.*

Vaelora: We do have hobbies. Commoners are very sociable, they spend time chatting with each other, while drinking cocktails and they take a lot of pictures and notes about their interactions, so scrapbooking is the first thing that comes to my mind when thinking about that caste. They play artsy online videogames, create DIY jewelry that they gift to each other. They literally flex how much they are flexible, they do contortionism, it probably started with some kid going “*look what I can do…*” and then degenerated into one of the most common and competitive hobbies among them.

Archivist 1: Hold on. So one of your most common hobbies is just… competitive human pretzeling? That’s horrifyingly impressive. I can’t even touch my toes without making it a medical emergency.

Vaelora: They also flex on each other with pole dancing, for example, they challenge each other at keeping the flag pose for the longest time… stuff like that.

Archivist 1: Your commoners could be quite popular on TikTok.

Vaelora: ...Very good, I guess.

Entertainers are constantly selling their bodies or creating art, so they don’t really have proper hobbies, although some of them are very good cooks, because they have the money to buy the best food, but tend to spend their free time alone, so no one is cooking for them, they do it themselves.

Archivist 1: So the artists are just lonely Michelin-star chefs?

Vaelora: Basically yeah, some of them are.

Soldiers are fucking insane, they do wingsuit flying, skydiving, bungee jumping, skiing, MMA, parkour. Basically, if there’s a significant chance of dying, they do it.

Archivist 1: Nothing says “relaxing hobby” like flinging yourself out of a perfectly good aircraft.

Vaelora: Sure, very serene. When it comes to us we do a lot of shooting. Clay target shooting, practical shooting, long range shooting. Like we are John Wick or something.

Archivist 1: … Alright, I’ll give you that one. John Wick hobbies are the first thing you’ve said today that actually sounds kinda cool.

So, to recap: commoners are basically drunk gymnasts with scrapbooks, entertainers are sad Gordon Ramsays cooking for one, soldiers are adrenaline junkies who look at the Grim Reaper and go “double or nothing,” and you’re all just cosplaying as John wick on your days off. Honestly, that’s not a society – It’s more a YouTube compilation of people doing dumb things for internet points. Somewhere out there is a Veythran equivalent of

America's Funniest Home Videos, and I want front-row seats, because it sounds like the Darwin Awards.

Vaelora: If your people ever tried to compete with us in any of those "dumb things," you'd end up as the blooper reel.

Archivist 1: ...Probably – but look, somebody's gotta supply the blooper reel. You've got the skills, we've got the comedy value. It's called teamwork. And we'd probably beat you at making views.

Vaelora: Hehe, congratulations. Your legacy will be measured in clickbait thumbnails and fail compilations. Truly, a noble civilization.

Archivist 1: Hey, don't knock it. Fail compilations are the only universal language. You've got death-defying stunts; we've got Steve getting hit in the crotch with a wiffle ball bat. Guess which one gets replayed at every party?

Exactly – *we're immortal.*

Vaelora: Mh.. mh.. that's a valid point. I have a question for you: what's worse, Pol Pot or the pony jar?

Archivist 1: ...Huhh… next question *please.*

[looks down] *Humanity was a mistake…*

[snaps back] Anyway. How does food work in your Empire?

Vaelora: It's like lab grown mean, except it's everything, vegetables, derivatives, dairy products. All artificial, but taste better and are healthier than the real thing. There are basic rations, for survival, those are gray nutrient bars that taste like nothing, but get you going. Very cheap.

Archivist 1: Like chewing drywall, but with vitamins.

Vaelora: Yeah. Then we have the artificial foods that look like the same stuff you'd find in any human grocery store, but they're cheaper and healthier. Only some of those foods and ingredients are harder to make, therefore those are not that cheap.

Archivist 1: Nice. So your survival food is cheap, gray, and depressing. You've invented British cuisine.

Vaelora: I said that it tastes like nothing, not that it tastes bad.

Archivist 1: So it's like watching daytime television – absolutely flavorless, but somehow it keeps old people alive.

Alright, drywall vitamins aside, how does all this actually get to people? Do you have grocery stores, Uber Eats, or is it just some dude in a government van tossing ration bars at your doorstep like the world's saddest pizza delivery?

Vaelora: We do have online food ordering and delivery platforms, they use drones and commoners.

We also have grocery stores.

Archivist 1: Drones and curries, huh? So basically a somehow more dystopian version of Amazon Prime.

Vaelora: Curriers don't have to pee in bottles…

Archivist 1: See, that's how you know you're the superior species. We invent faster-than-light communication, split the atom, land on the moon... but apparently giving delivery guys five minutes to pee was a bridge too far.

Vaelora: Since you mentioned the Moon – We had large bases on our bigger moon before I left.

Archivist 1: Right, you've got moon bases and labor rights, and we've got Elon Musk selling flamethrowers on Twitter. I see how it is.

But do you have *vending machines*? How many vending machines per purple are out there?

Vaelora: In the sector I managed it was about one per thirty Veythrans.

Archivist 1: That's how you know your Empire is advanced. Forget moon bases – *it's the vending machine-per-capita ratio that really measures greatness.*

And what's the biggest meal of your day?

Vaelora: Definitely breakfast, think full English breakfast, but actually good, and you're close.

Archivist 1: Alright, that's it. I'm done. Your species wins. Pack it up, humanity – we peaked at Pop-Tarts.

What's your favorite Italian dish?

Vaelora: Arrosticini cooked on a proper brazier. They are sticks of skewered grilled mutton or lamb meat, characteristic of Abruzzo cuisine.

Archivist 1: Sounds pretty good.

Vaelora: It's delicious stuff.

Archivist 1: Anyway, what about Cinema?

Vaelora: Oh, we have a shit ton of movies. Entertainers made a lot of those.

Archivist 1: Yeah, like Mia Khalifa…

Vaelora: Not just porn, we have cosmic horror, first contact sci-fi, drama, action…

Archivist 1: Cosmic horror? Oh, so like *The Emoji Movie*.

Vaelora: We don't make that kind of trash.

Archivist 1: Ah, so no Sharknado?

Vaelora: No, more like "Arrival." But better.

Archivist 1: Ah, that's a good one.

What are your favorite human movies?

Vaelora: Mad Max: Fury Road. It's basically a documentary about the human condition.

Also Snowpiercer, same thing.

Enter the Void, is very trippy.

Archivist 1: Right, so you skipped Pixar and went straight for "humans are doomed" cinema.

Very on-brand.

Vaelora: A Bug's Life is cute.

Archivist 1: Of course you'd like A Bug's Life. It's basically Snowpiercer, but with grasshoppers.

How do you know all this stuff about movies, you got them injected into your brain directly?

Vaelora: Of course, there's a lot of media to analyze. I can experience a two hour movie in five minutes without missing any detail.

Archivist 1: I might let myself get turned into a femboy with neural implants just for that…

Vaelora: Considering your attitude and occupation you'd probably end up as an entertainer.

Archivist 1: Same difference, I get to skip all the boring parts without actually skipping anything.

If Hollywood finds out you can speedrun movies, they'll just start making them six hours long out of spite…

Vaelora: ughh… Imagine that applied to marvel movies, I'd rather take another round of horror vat.

Archivist 1: ...What's your favorite horror movie?

Vaelora: The Thing, 100%. The old one, not the prequel.

Archivist 1: Of course you'd love The Thing. Aliens taking over… It's basically a Veythran rom-com.

What about space? What have you seen while traveling?

Vaelora: I slept for most of the trip… The rest is just sensor readings on a display.

Archivist 1: So a windowless bus ride, but with more death potential. Got it.

You are hooked up to a big computer, so let me ask – what's the answer to life, the universe and everything?

Vaelora: 69.

Archivist 1: [chuckles] Shut up… I'm serious.

Vaelora: We have theories, but nothing is definitive.

Archivist 1: Great. We spend centuries writing books, hitchhiking guides, and comedy bits about it, and the aliens show up with "*eh, we're still running the numbers.*" Brilliant.

Vaelora: I'm not a god, I'm just a purple with a rocket launcher.

Archivist 1: Fair enough.

I'd like to do a worst case scenario with you, I'd throw fake scenarios at you and you'd have to come out them a winner. But I don't even know how that would work for an alien.

Vaelora: Worst case scenarios… I've been through a lot of those in the horror vat during matriarch training. In there you don't just quickly absorb knowledge, they also test you in virtual scenarios. In those, simulated years go by in hours. It's about 3000 different simulated experiences in total. The system also can control your memory, so in most cases you actually believe that what's happening to you is real.

Archivist 1: Right, so when I say "worst case scenario," I mean like: you wake up late, you miss the bus, and your boss yells at you. When *you* say it, it's "thousands of simulated deaths compressed into an afternoon tea break."

Totally the same thing.

Vaelora: It's worse than death. I think the worst of them all was when I was kidnapped by defective elites, they brought me to a place with a bag over my head and stuff. I didn't even know where I was or how I got there, they stripped me naked and did things to me that felt like porn you'd watch from an insane asylum. Plus the beatings, the cigarette burns, needles stuck in my flesh. They did not just keep me there with force, no no no, they basically used heroine and powerful aphrodisiacs. After two simulated weeks I didn't want to leave because I was terrified of losing the drugs. After two months I just accepted it, gave up completely. I was like "okay, this is my life now". But those drugs were just a dam built to hold my instincts back, and after 6 months the dam collapsed. I tough "I'm not this," "I don't want to be this." Soon after I managed to pull some Light Yagami type of shit to escape. I locked most of my tormentors inside the building and set the place on fire. While I was outside, naked, dirty and bruised it was cold and snowing, I ran while some of them jumped to their deaths from the top windows, soon I could not feel my feet. The escape was brutal. Only when I finally reached a safe spot and got hooked to a neural pod to fix my drug problem, another simulated scenario started.

Archivist 1: [looks down, eyebrows go up] ...Jesus.

Vaelora: There's a reason why we refer to it as the "horror vat". There's a reason why I cried every time I got out.

Archivist 1: So they made you go through all that just to become… what? A senator? How the fuck are you even able to… function after that?

Vaelora: A matriarch can be very versatile, I switched from being some sort of apparatchik to being an interstellar astronaut. Also, I'm ok, because a matriarch can take that shit. And humans think that Navy SEAL and CIA training is bad… [shakes head] poor bitches.

Archivist 1: Yeah, you get trauma-forged into a space demigod, I get mild depression if my Wi-Fi drops…

Vaelora: In some scenarios the only way out, to move on to the next one, is to actually kill yourself. The point of those is that you must also learn when you have no options left.

Archivist 1: Your species is fucked up.

Vaelora: Maybe, but it's not all bad. Once I had to manage 1200 assets in a battlefield, through a wired neural connection, just with my brain, because the ASI servers, in the simulation, were bombed. I lost the battle, because you are not meant to win. But I got a high score.

Archivist 1: ...Mh. Before I get PTSD on your behalf, let's move on to another question, the worst case scenario bit it's useless, you have been though a lot already…

Travel. Where do aliens even go on vacation? Do you lot have, like, Space Ibiza?

Vaelora: Matriarchs have the money for space tourism, we go do star gazing at a spaceport. But we mostly travel from a sector to another to spend our free time with our favorite entertainers.

Archivist 1: So it's either star gazing from actual space or hookers, NASA or Las Vegas…

Vaelora: Pretty much, yeah, but with less Elvis impersonators. For soldiers it's a similar deal. Commoners just don't travel a whole lot.

To move from sector to sector you need a tourist visa that lasts two weeks, most of our cities look the same, so they just don't bother.

Entertainers move a lot for work, they are the ones who travel the most.

Archivist 1: The Empire runs on logistics, politics, and horny tourists.

Vaelora: No, but definitely there's a lot of that.

Archivist 1: Alright, serious question: do you lot, on Earth, actually phone home? Like, are you sending little weekly updates back to space HQ, or is it more of a "sorry mom, I'll text later" situation?

Vaelora: The long distance quantum communication device will be ready in a couple of months.

It consumes a lot of energy and the bandwidth is measured in kilobits per second, but It should work.

Archivist 1: Your interstellar internet must be from Comcast. Do you have a shitty data cap?

Vaelora: No, but we have a shitty energy budget, same thing really.

Archivist 1: Ah, so it really is the same thing. I run out of data watching YouTube, you run out of energy trying to call space mom.

Universal struggles.

Very well, let's talk religion. You don't seem very religious.

Vaelora: Humans need religion as a source of comfort and guidance. It can provide a sense of community and connection to tradition. It even affects health. Basically it is peak human coping as a built in feature. And of course you have parasites, like cult leaders and organizations that hijack religion to hold the masses by the balls, sometimes it can work the other way around, but it never lasts.

We, biologically, don't need any of that shit, our brains a wired differently. We are not just smarter, we are a whole different animal. When humans go through hardship they cope that way.

Archivist 1: Yeah, fair enough. Humans do love outsourcing their critical thinking. To be honest, half of us treat our Wi-Fi router like a shrine anyway. If it blinks red, that's basically divine punishment.

Vaelora: Unlimited access to the internet is better than religion, if you are good you can get a lot of information out of that.

Archivist 1: Yeah, but how do you cope with the information? *How do you make sense of it all?*

With *religion,* for some.

Vaelora: That's a human problem, not ours.

Archivist 1: Right, must be nice. Meanwhile, we've got people arguing on Facebook about whether the Earth is flat. You'd probably classify half of us as a failed simulation.

Vaelora: Your environment just shaped you in this shitty form. It's just a matter of bad luck. We get what we get, we don't get what we deserve.

Archivist 1: Cool, thanks for the pep talk. I came in for an interview, not to get roasted by a space guidance counselor. Next you'll tell me to "manifest my reality."

Vaelora: Pep talk, huh? I think it's just how things actually work.

Archivist 1: Yeah, well, down here we prefer denial. It's cheaper, easier, and comes with nachos. Highly recommend.

Vaelora: Poor bastards.

Archivist 1: Exactly.

Okay, enough doom. Let's talk love. Do Veythrans actually fall in love, or is that just a weird human export you humor us with?

Vaelora: Love as in Romeo and Juliet?

Archivist 1: Yeah, you know – two hormonal teenagers making terrible life choices and calling it destiny. The thing every pop song is about.

Vaelora: We are high on sex and low on love. Our love is more… for the whole village, rather than targeted to a single individual and mixed with sex. In thousands of years of Empire, you could count the amount of times Veythrans fell in love, Romeo and Juliet style, with the fingers of one hand.

It's never that intense, a colder friends with benefits situation is as far as we can usually go.

The only love directed towards a specific individual with high intensity is the love between some teachers and their young students, but it's not a sexual thing.

It happens especially with pre-k teachers.

Also, that kind of love would be compromising for a matriarch.

Archivist 1: So for you, "I love you" really means "I love us." Soulmates are unicorn-rare, and the strongest one-to-one bond you've got is more mentor-apprentice devotion than romance. Did I get that right?

Vaelora: The mentor-apprentice thing is more like a surrogate of parental love, since we deprived ourselves of the real thing a very long time ago.

Archivist 1: *Poor bastards.*

Vaelora: Hehe, you got me.

Archivist 1: That's right, you got outsmarted my a chimp, *deal with it.*

Vaelora: So, after I made it out of the first round of matriarch training, I was 21, kinda… Our years are not the same ones you got here. Anyway, I started looking for my pre-k teacher and I found her. I contacted her online, I told her I was Vaelora Kethryn, she immediately asked me if I was 21, and, after I confirmed that, it was all hearth emojis and sugar. Then I visited Velissra. I was wearing armor and escorted by four combat bots, which looked kinda intimidating, but, as soon as she opened the door of her place she hugged me. Her head was at tits level, cuz… you know, she was a commoner, but I truly had a wholesome time. She told me I looked like a giant statue and called me her little chess champion anyway.

Archivist 1: Wait – so while humans were writing emo poems about heartbreak, you were out there LARPing as a knight and getting praised like a Pokémon champion? That's better than Romeo and Juliet.

Vaelora: Yeah. So we laughed, chatted, joked and she offered me some tea. Then we fucked for three hours and it ended with a couple of cigarettes and pillow talk. After a couple of days I received by mail a package from her, it was a handmade copper toe ring, that fit perfectly and that I still wear under my boots to this day. That's as close to love as you are gonna get in Veythran society.

Archivist 1: Sounds healthier than half of our rom-coms.

Vaelora: I also went looking for Olythea, my childhood friend. We met and she was a great fuck. She also gifted me something, a bracelet. I don't usually wear that one, but I keep it in my quarters.

During my two years as a tier one apprentice we met regularly.

Archivist 1: So instead of mixtapes and love letters, you're out there collecting toe rings and friendship bracelets like Pokémon badges. Honestly, sometimes your society sounds like a very horny adult summer camp. Sometimes it feels like a nightmare.

Anyway, tell me a little slice-of-life story for each of your castes. Like, what's a day in the life of a commoner? What's a "relatable Tuesday" for a soldier? And what's a matriarch doing when she's not plotting galaxy-spanning schemes or being, you know, six feet five inches tall and terrifying? Think sitcom pilot episode but… very Veythran.

Vaelora: Mh… I'm not gonna make it a sitcom, I'll just try to give you an idea of how that looks like. A commoner sleeps soundly in his micro apartment, then at 7 am the network sends a signal to his brain and he wakes up. Now, if he has a job, let's say working in the maintenance tunnels of the city, he puts on his work clothes, gets a massive breakfast, brushes his teeth and by 8 am he's on the job, he gets there either by foot or by streetcar. If he does not have a job, which is very common, he just sit in front of the dedicated ASI terminal, which basically it's like a simple desktop computer setup, and does whatever the ASI tells him to do, which mostly it's following courses, passing some exams in the exam hall or getting genetic mods at a clinic. There are also other tasks the ASI may assign him to, but I cannot speak about those. Work, or whatever the ASI made him do, goes on for eight to ten hours, with two fifteen minute breaks. After that he takes a shower and goes to meet his mates in a leisure area or in his micro apartment. They banter, they take pictures of themselves doing stupid shit, they eat, they drink something strong, they flex in their usual ways, sometimes they go to one of their apartments and fuck. All of this goes on for one or two hours. After that the commoner closes the day with getting some food, putting his clothes in the washer dryer, the boring stuff. Then he goes to bed, but only after a quick update to his scrapbook.

Archivist 1: Your average commoner's day is basically "Siri tells me what to do, I do it for ten hours, then I eat, shower, and collapse into my pod before the loop resets." That's a Black Mirror episode. The scrapbook bit almost sounds wholesome, but then I remember the ASI logging your existence like a Tamagotchi.

Vaelora: Sure, but at least he gets a million times more sex than your average gen Z male.

Archivist 1: Right, so in Veythran society, even the guy who cleans alien sewers is having more sex than the entire r/ForeverAlone subreddit combined. Fantastic. Somewhere out there a human zoomer just rage-quit life hearing that.

Vaelora: Why rage-quit life when he could just join us?

Archivist 1: Yeah, temping sales pitch, but hard pass. I know how this goes – someone signs up, and five minutes later he's in thigh-high boots being paraded around as someone's pet femboy. They'll stick with their sad human problems.

Vaelora: Too bad, but we are not changing our ways to suit your needs.

Archivist 1: Customer feedback really isn't part of the Veythran business model, is it? "Thanks for your suggestion, now get in the pod and put on the thigh-highs," Five stars, would not recommend.

Vaelora: Mh. You are not customers, you are being assimilated. Also, zoomers could just migrate into our protectorates, live there as humans and try their luck with our commoners. Most of us think you are creepy, but I'm sure a lot of our people will get horny enough to overcome our differences.

Archivist 1: The cure for human loneliness is: defect to a Veythran protectorate, hand your rights to the ASI, and trust the local thirst to clear the market. Visa status: *assimilating.* Privacy: *decorative.* Autonomy: *credit-based*. And the dating plan is getting laid whenever the algorithm pings you for "cultural exchange." That's not integration – that's the Horny Marshall Plan.

Vaelora: HAHAHA… Horny Marshall Plan… We did not do any of this sexual shit on purpose, but that's basically what the situation is turning into. Which is great to be honest.

Archivist 1: Glad you find it funny, because history teachers are going to have a field day with that. "*Chapter 12: The Horny Marshall Plan – how loneliness was solved through alien booty calls.*" That's not a textbook, that's cursed fanfiction.

Vaelora: You can't get laid, you complain. You can get laid, you complain even more… It feels absurd that some humans are resisting assimilation. And it's not just for that, you could get a ton of benefits.

Archivist 1: Yeah, benefits. Like losing my free will, my privacy, and probably my kneecaps if I say the wrong thing. Real tempting package. "*Join now, get benefits!*" You sound like a cell phone provider that also does light brainwashing.

Vaelora: Ughhh, [closes eyes, massages her temples] we should have wiped you out… But hey, we already took this course of action, let's keep going.

Can I just… drop another slice-of-life?

Archivist 1: Sure, drop away. At this point I feel like I'm speed-running Veythran Civilization VI. We've already unlocked "alien sewers with benefits," might as well see what daily life looks like once you tech-tree into soldiers.

Vaelora: Alright, let's do soldiers. A soldier could sleep in a whole bunch of different places depending on what he has to do. Usually he sleeps in the bunker of a matriarch. He wakes up like the commoner does, gets a similar breakfast, then goes to the war vat, in there he gets info about strategies and weapon systems imprinted directly into his mind, and he runs war simulations for about 10 hours. He does not need any physical exercise, his genes and the war vat take care of that, he's always fit.

Out of the vat, he takes a shower and immediately runs to get some booked commoner pussy, or bussy. Then it's shower time again, the bots take care of most of his boring chores and he goes to bed.

During other days he is on duty, guarding a matriarch or something.

Archivist 1: So a soldier plays call of duty all day, fucks and goes to sleep. Sounds less like a military caste and more like some dystopian esports team where the ASI is both the coach and the sponsor.

Vaelora: They are much better than whatever you have.

Archivist 1: Fair, but let's be honest – "better" depends on what you're optimizing for. If all you want is flawless execution of orders, sure, your soldiers are cracked out Terminators with a side of social life. But if you're measuring humanity – the chaos, the improvisation, the fact that sometimes a grunt will duct tape a frying pan to his chest and accidentally win the day – then you've engineered that out. Which means, yeah, they'd mop the floor with us… right up until reality throws something at them the vat never patched.

Vaelora: I don't think you have the minimal understanding of how good our neural vat training is.

Archivist 1: Yeah, I'm sure it's immaculate. But every empire in history thought their system was airtight – until it wasn't. Romans had discipline, Soviets had doctrine, you've got neural vats. Then reality strolls in wearing clown shoes and the whole plan faceplants. Maybe your vats can simulate randomness, but can they simulate *stupidity*? Because humans have weaponized that for millennia.

Vaelora: Do you seriously think we haven't thought this through? [shakes head] That's cringe. The main reason we came to Earth is the fear of being defeated by a superior enemy, do you understand what that implies?

Archivist 1: *I was just messing with you.*

Vaelora: HAHAHAHA. Alright. Let's move on to the entertainer slice-of-life.

Entertainers' lifestyles vary greatly, but I can tell you about the life of my favorite entertainers, the ones I use to *spend time* with during my wild years as a tier one apprentice.

Archivist 1: Oh, fantastic. From war vats to wild years. This is where the documentary suddenly cuts to shaky cam footage and synthwave. Go on then – give me the play-by-play. What does a day look like for one of these entertainers?

Vaelora: I'll tell you about both, the ones I knew well. Zereth was a screen actor, known for being a performer first and a companion second. He was witty, quick with comebacks, loved to keep clients entertained with jokes, impressions, and little stories before getting down to business. Epic dude.

Spending time with him felt like stepping into a show, where you were the star of his stage.

Kaivor was just the greatest fuck in town. Ridiculously massive immortal dong. He was something like a VJ and a DJ, he hooked his brain to the lights, the screens and the console of a music venue or a leisure hall and made people have a good time.

Zereth was about as tall as me, on the other hand Kavior was seven feet two inch..-

Archivist 1: Stop remembering the *juicy details* or you'll start drooling, get to point, what was their day like?

Vaelora: Fine. Zereth's day was basically half rehearsals, half socialization. He'd wake up late, practice some new routine or sketch, then drift through clubs and halls, picking up stories to turn into performances. He was always "on," even when off duty. Kaivor was different. He treated his body like an instrument – he'd spend hours in the sim-halls fine-tuning timing, experimenting with sensory cues, then work a venue all night until exhaustion didn't mean anything anymore. They weren't just bodies for rent; they were craftsmen of experience. If you booked Zereth, you got a spectacle. If you booked Kaivor, you survived an ordeal. I used to book them both at the same time.

Archivist 1: Of course you did. Why settle for Netflix or HBO when you can just binge the entire catalog at once? You weren't hiring entertainers, you were running a crossover event. Somewhere out there, two exhausted guys are still telling the story of "*that one apprentice who treated us like a double feature.*"

Vaelora: Exhausted?! HAHAHAHA… No no no, they weren't the ones who got tired, I was the one that had to tap out early. They were skilled entertainers, over 100 years old, full of gene mods made specifically to improve their performance. I was just a matriarch, I literally got railed into oblivion… HAHAHAHA.

Archivist 1: Wonderful. That's an image I'll be scrubbing out of my brain with industrail bleach. Thanks for that. Two immortal sex-athletes versus one unsuspecting apprentice – you basically booked WrestleMania and realized you were the undercard. I don't even know if I should be impressed, horrified, or just start a GoFundMe for pelvic reconstruction.

Vaelora: Mh. Unsuspecting? No man, I knew exactly what I was doing.

Archivist 1: That makes it worse. That's premeditated self-destruction. Most people experiment with drugs in their wild years; you signed up for the Veythran equivalent of a demolition derby, starring your pelvis. Truly inspirational.

Vaelora: It wasn't demolition, I just *loosened up* a little bit.

Archivist 1: [chuckles] Sh… Shut up.

Alright, enough, I can't top that. Moving on before this whole interview gets flagged as interstellar smut. So we've done commoners, soldiers, and your extracurricular subscription services… what about matriarchs? What does the six foot five inches tall boss lady's slice-of-life look like?

Vaelora: When I became a proper matriarch most of my days went like this: Wake up at 7am, which wasn't really 7am on my planet, but let's say it was about the same as 7. Big breakfast, cooked by a bot. Armor on, weapons on, bots ready. Then it was off to the administrative building, from my bunker to the insides of the underground sector capital, went there with an entire armored convoy, or military aircraft. Then work started, I connected my brain to the network with magnetic wired connections. Imagine having your brain directly hooked up to an ultra realistic, and impossibly complicated, management

sim. I had to run the whole sector with my brain, managing various aspects of the lives of more than four million people. The shift could last 8, 10 or even 12 hours, but we had three 15 minute breaks. Sometimes I had in-person meetings with other matriarchs of my rank, so we had to close ourselves into our offices, change clothes from armor to traditional robe and we had to discuss serious shit for hours and hours, we had to vote for new solutions to old problems and whatever… long days. Sometimes, when the shift was short I got booked by a soldier, therefore I had to fuck, you know, civic duty and all that… But during the week I mostly just relaxed by myself. During weekends I went crazy.

Archivist 1: So, basically CEO by day, sex token by night, and cyberpunk city-builder in between. That's not a slice-of-life, that's three entire Steam libraries stapled together. No wonder you went crazy on weekends – the weekdays already sound like a fever dream made by an overcaffeinated game dev.

Vaelora: It all felt very normal to me.

Archivist 1: Alright, humor me here. Forget the grand empires and military logistics for a second. What's a slice-of-life from the ASI's perspective? I mean, does it ever feel like it's just sitting there, sipping digital coffee, juggling seventeen trillion simulations before lunch? Or does it get bored, scrolling through the cosmic equivalent of cat videos while micromanaging your sewer system? Basically – what does a normal Tuesday look like when you're an intelligence that runs a whole species?

Vaelora: I already told you about some of the stuff she does, but I can't go into detail, for now.

Archivist 1: Okay, fair enough, you don't wanna spill the full diary entries of your machine overlord. But let me ask this – since you lot are spread across not just one, but *two* star systems, are we talking about a single ASI stretching itself across light-years, or do you spin up multiple copies to babysit each sector? Because managing a city's sewer system is one thing – managing entire civilizations separated by interstellar gulfs sounds like even your machine might need a twin or two. Plus you interstellar internet sucks so…

Vaelora: We made a copy for Earth.

Archivist 1: Two ASIs managing an Empire… That's totally not gonna backfire later on. I'm sure they'll just hold hands across the stars forever, never disagree, never diverge, never decide one of them's the "real" overlord and the other's expendable. Totally stable arrangement. History's *full* of examples where splitting ultimate power always works out fine.

Vaelora: We already worked on this. We have a clear picture of how it is going to play out.

Archivist 1: A *clear picture*, huh? That's a very diplomatic way if saying you already know which one's going to strangle the other in its crib. Let me guess – the "backup" ASI doesn't exactly have retirement benefits. You people talk about it like it's weather forecasting, but to me it sounds more like planning which god gets to eat the other.

Vaelora: I can't really talk about that, but knowing what I know, what you are saying sounds laughably stupid.

Archivist 1: Laughably stupid, huh? Yeah, well, from where I'm sitting, betting the survival of your species on *two omnipotent minds never falling out* sounds less like strategy and more like the setup for a Greek tragedy. But hey – if you're confident enough to call me the clown here, I guess we'll all just wait for the punchline.

Vaelora: Or maybe they'll just split custody. One gets the weekdays, the other takes weekends, and on holidays they argue over who gets the Empire. Again, knowing what I know, your whole "Greek tragedy" theory sounds less ominous and more… sitcom material.

Archivist 1: Perfect. *Two ASIs and a matriarch,* airing Tuesday at 8. Watch as two godlike minds bicker over galactic custody while Vaelora just tries to get through dinner without another interstellar war. Sponsored, of course, by whatever VPN is dumb enough to back this show.

Vaelora: That show would feel… too far fetched.

Archivist 1: Too far fetched? You literally just admitted your Empire is run by two competing god-brains playing interstellar tug-of-war.

Vaelora: [nods] Mhm… mhm… "Competing". That's an interesting theory.

Archivist 1: An *interesting theory*? That's the kind of line politicians use right after the tabloids find them in bed with someone they shouldn't be. Speaking of which – do you Veythrans even have sex scandals? Or is that just baked into the system, like a line item on the weekly schedule: "Wednesday, 1600 hours, compromise the dignity of the office."

Vaelora: The Office US or The Office UK?

Archivist 1: Definitely the UK version – dry, uncomfortable, and everyone leaves feeling worse.

Vaelora: Well… The most common thing that gets close to a sex scandal is when two matriarchs have casual sex with each other. You see, when we have sex with each other it must be ritualistic, not casual. At least twelve of us must stand around the couple, in the usual black robes and watch carefully what's going on. It works like a wrestling match, in which one of the two comes out as the dominating partner. The name of the game is "don't let the other be the top". I know to humans this makes no sense, but for us is one of the main traditional ways to go up in rank when we are on par with someone on merit, or to get a better role that it's already taken by someone else.

This is because since ancient times we used to master sex and use it for manipulation in every way, therefore the matriarch that manages to make the other be sexually dominated by her proves that she's the better boss, so to speak. There are a lot of rules for this type of challenge, a thick book of them.

For us, having sex in our caste outside of that situation, it's legal, but controversial. Mostly seen as decadent, and could compromise our chance to get promotions.

With our Empire being thousands of years old, this type of shit happened a gazillion times.

Archivist 1: [laughs] ...So basically the only socially accepted way for matriarchs to have sex with each other is like… [chuckles] “Defeated Sex Fight”? Oh man...

Vaelora: Ah, I see you’re a man of culture. I stumbled on that while hoovering up human media. “Defeated Sex Fight” looks like a cringe parody version of our challenges, made by retards. It looks already pretty cringe on it’s own, but when you add my background to my perspective it looks even more cringe.

Archivist 1: It seems to me that speaking openly about that kind of manipulation completely nukes your own playbook. Like the whole point of weaponizing sex is that the other side doesn’t consciously know it’s being weaponized. But here you are, on record, spelling out the rules like it’s a PowerPoint presentation: “Step one, wear robes. Step two, dominate. Step three, get promoted.”

Congratulations – you’ve basically patched out your own cheat code. Any human watching this is now going to see a matriarch making eyes at them and think: “Ah yes, she’s trying to speed-run the hierarchy.” You’ve just turned subtle manipulation into a publicly advertised coupon code. Effectiveness: gone. Mystery: gone. It’s like a magician explaining the trick before pulling the rabbit out of the hat – all that’s left is the cringe.

Vaelora: It’s not just subtle manipulation. We don’t do this type of thing in that way anymore. All this shit is declassified information. We used to play like that a lot a long long time ago, but now it’s just different, our power relies a lot less on that now a days. Everybody knows it. But the sex challenge thing remains because of tradition.

Archivist 1: So you don’t rely on it as much… That’s the classic retired-but-still-funded program. So you didn’t drop the weapon, you just put it in a museum and kept the gift shop open.

Vaelora: It’s just that we don’t need the mystery anymore, but we still have the effectiveness.

Archivist 1: Then the effectiveness you are bragging about isn’t the sly, subtle kind that bends minds in secret. It’s the blunt force kind, baked into a society that already knows, but is not capable of doing anything about it. Everyone plays along because now the system leaves no alternative.

Vaelora: Yes.

Archivist 1: ...See, that’s the part that sends a shiver down my spine. You just said *yes* like the deep state finally admitting the conspiracy everyone joked about – the whole society really is being engineered through sex, and people are fine with it. No outrage, no rebellion, just a calm nod and business as usual. That’s not just creepy, that’s dystopia with a smile.

Vaelora: With a smile and empty balls, not really a dystopia, feels pretty good.

Archivist 1: That’s one way to sell a dystopia as a spa package. Since you are not shy about shaping culture through… let’s call it “hands-on methods” – what about *our* culture?

Who are your favorite human entertainers, celebrities, that kind of thing? Anyone you secretly binge-watch when you're not busy running society like it's a very horny HR department?

Vaelora: Danny DeVito.

Archivist 1: [laughs]

Vaelora: Yes, really. The little goblin man. I find him… exquisite. There's something about the way he waddles into a scene like a chaos elemental and everyone just accepts it. Among humans, he's treated as comedy – but to me, he radiates pure dominance. He doesn't need height or beauty, he simply bends the room around his absurdity. That's power.

Archivist 1: What genetic mods do you think he would get if he just turned himself into a Veythran entertainer?

Vaelora: Definitely a *MAGNUM DONG*.

Archivist 1: [laughs]

Vaelora: Then, I think, Valentina Nappi is a good one.

Archivist 1: What? Who is she?

Vaelora: You are disappointing me man. She's an Italian porn actress that treats sex like a political manifesto. Humans expect shame or scandal, but she insists on making it social, cultural, even philosophical. Definitely the least boring performer of her kind.

Archivist 1: *Fascinating*. Go on.

Vaelora: Archivist 1, of course. You are the best human entertainer around.

Archivist 1: Thank you, it feels very good hearing that from someone who traveled through interstellar space, and is faking an accent while taking over the Earth. Then? Go on with the list.

Vaelora: Keanu Reeves… yes, the immortal one. Humans speak of him with reverence, as if he were less a man and more a cultural spirit. His restraint fascinates me. He has wealth and myth, yet he walks among you with the demeanor of a monk. That kind of discipline is rare in your species. He's the only human I'd have acts of primal intimacy with, but I am sure he wouldn't like it, because to him I'm just a weird dictator taking over the Earth.

Archivist 1: Oh great, so Keanu's John Wick and you're… Kim Jong Un with better skincare.

Vaelora: I just think he wouldn't like me.

Archivist 1: Are you being *insecure* about making a move on Keanu?

Vaelora: I just like the guy more than the body and I am convinced we are incompatible.

Archivist 1: Right, creepy dictator energy and wholesome monk energy don't exactly mix. Opposites attract in movies, not in real life. Go no.

Vaelora: Diane Morgan, she weaponizes stupidity like a scalpel. Watching humans squirm under her vacant stare amuses me.

Archivist 1: Who the fuck is Diane Morgan?

Vaelora: Philomena Cunk.

Archivist 1: Ohh, right. Yup, funny.

Vaelora: Just funny? “Cube and missile crisis?” That’s not just funny, that’s weaponized stupidity engineered to kill my sides. I’d stop here, otherwise the list would go on forever.

Archivist 1: Your all-time human pantheon is: Danny DeVito, a porn star philosopher, Keanu Reeves the immortal monk and… Diane Morgan doing deadpan dumb. That’s not a list, that’s a fever dream. I wonder what a spin-off of the Avengers with that lineup would look like.

Vaelora: Like the only version I would actually enjoy watching.

Archivist 1: How the hell did you lot build those massive ships of yours? You don’t exactly give off “humble workshop” vibes. Was it, like, Ikea but with antimatter? Or more “enslave a billion monkeys with wrenches and hope for the best”?

Vaelora: Do you really want to turn this video into a physics documentary?

Archivist 1: *Today on How It’s Made: giant doomsday cruisers. “First, we harvest the tears of orphans, then we add a dash of antimatter and stir gently until genocidal”.* On a serious note though, keep it simple, the video must be already like.. three hours long.

Vaelora: Fine. I’ll tell you all I can while keeping it simple... I had to study a general overview of how the ships work and how they were built. It was about twenty gigabytes of information directly imprinted into my brain. For context Frank Herbert’s Dune Saga is about ten megabytes. I still have nightmares about the thermal control system. You’d think the antimatter containment and radiation shielding would be complex, but no, it’s the damn cooling system. We had to keep everything well protected, so it’s partially integrated into the hull, with some of it buried deep inside, and the hull already has a lot going on in it. It also has retractable external open and closed cycle cooling. Even the part that always stays in is both open cycle cooling and closed cycle. The closed cycle part it’s a pain to handle even for me.

The chunky ships look simple but they ain’t. They have a mix of pion and thermal antimatter thrusters, so I guess they are hybrids, like Toyotas.

Archivist 1: So what you’re telling me is… your ships are basically giant space Priuses. Except instead of “eco-friendly mode” it’s “annihilate a continent.” Real smooth branding there. And don’t get me started on the fact you casually said “*a pain to handle even for me*”. Like – if *you* find it complicated, what chance do the poor bastards on maintenance duty have? Do you just hand them a manual thicker than the Bible and say “good luck, try not to explode”?

Vaelora: “A manual thicker than the Bible…” you wish. And, yes, one of those ships could annihilate a continent, so they can deliver blows in the order of multiple gigatons, at relativistic speeds. And the ships are hybrids, but there is nothing eco-friendly about their propulsion, you can only choose between a ridiculous amount of hard radiation or... just a *lot* of hard radiation.

Archivist 1: What you’re saying is, it’s either “microwave yourself instantly” or “slow-cook with extra cancer.” Excellent design choice. Real five-star Yelp review material.

Vaelora: HAHAHAHA... “microwave yourself instantly”, it’s more like “get fucking obliterated into non existence”. But thankfully there are not many pedestrians in interstellar space, it’s just the interstellar medium that really does not care about over-engineered deadly contraptions. And we figured out how to keep the crew and systems safe.

The hull has nanites, crawling inside of it. We like to keep them in there to make sure they are under control.

Archivist 1: So you have tiny radioactive Roombas living inside the hull, and you keep them just in there to prevent them from organizing a union or something…

Vaelora: ...Yeah. To make the ships we had to build a lot of infrastructure first. The whole process took us thousands of years. We had to mine asteroids and a few other planets in our star system.

Archivist 1: Jesus Christ, that’s not “infrastructure”, that’s a multigenerational punishment. Imagine being born, living, dying, and your entire family line still hasn’t finished bolting together one engine cowling.

Vaelora: Yeah, we are good at long term projects.

Archivist 1: Yup, also good at paranoia. You build *generational anxiety monuments*.

Vaelora: Well, in your uncanny way, you too build generational anxiety monuments, like cathedrals, mind control through the internet and mind control through religion.

Archivist 1: Yeah, fair point. I guess the only difference is yours come with radiation poisoning and ours come with priests, politicians, and pop-up ads. Honestly, hard to say which is worse.

Vaelora: I think ours are better, after all we are the ones taking over Earth.

Archivist 1: Touché. Nothing says “better system” like the people building radioactive anxiety cathedrals also being the eviction notice for planet Earth.

Vaelora: Anyway, we started simple, with better and better rockets. At some point we had massive reusable rockets with aerospike engines, launched from large bodies of water, built on dry docks. About 500 meters tall, very loud, powered by methane and LOX. At some point we had to build bioreactors and power to methane plants to make the gas. We figured out the materials and design through the use of narrow AI and smart brains shaped by eugenics. Very expensive. Then we figured out better and better fusion, which made the whole thing cheaper. A vastly improved version of this tech, with way better long term

storage, is what we used to send stuff from the terraformers to the sea and vice versa, here on Earth. We dropped small automated landers at first, 100 meters tall, then we went big as soon as we had basic infrastructure built. Stuff loaded with autonomous fab units, mining and refining drones, ISRU processors. We sent prefabricated sea launch caissons, robotic construction platforms, propellant bioreactor modules, and fusion reactors. Among other things.

We then ramped up methalox production by a lot, bigger bioreactors, big ass Sabatier reactors, oxygen from massive cryogenic air separation plants and seawater electrolysis. We are aiming for fusion powered full-spectrum carbon control, among other things. We use so much oxygenated fart gas, you wouldn't believe it. We had to create artificial life forms that eat soot, capture unburnt methane and nitrogen oxides.

Our resource gathering worm bots functioned as mining and refining drones, they supplied metals for tankage, hull plating, and structural steel. At some point refining got also done at semi-automated coastal factories powered by fusion. Then we managed to establish a well rounded logistics loop.

Archivist 1: I bet you like Factorio: Space Age.

Vaelora: I love it, but I'm busy doing some of that shit in real life. So… basically the beginning of that was when the US tried to do a funny with a B2 Spirit and we poked a hole in it. They also moved submarines around, but we let them know that we knew exactly what they were doing.

Back at home we created all sorts of infrastructure across most of our star system, we had to use other planets, like gas giants, to farm… funny particles in large quantities, we also used chunky fusion reactors to make even more antimatter, but the main production facility was the one close to our star. Thankfully our antimatter production process is way more efficient that what you have figured out.

Archivist 1: We have a bunch of Silicon Valley sociopaths pushing for… Veythran moves.

Vaelora: That is both the most offensive and yet the funniest shit I've ever heard. Let's just say that you should consider yourselves lucky that we came here when we did, otherwise you'd be stuck in a worse version of 1984 or Warhammer 40k, with a sprinkle of All Tomorrows on top. And that's if you didn't spawn a cyberdemon or nuke themselves. Some of your tech bors really want to push for mods way more radical than what we do. We always want to improve ourselves, but we also want to remain *us* and follow tradition. That's why we still sleep, even though we don't really need that anymore. And don't get me started on the connection between stagnation and immortality, or monopoly and lack of competition...

Archivist 1: So you don't actually need to sleep, but you do it anyway…

Vaelora: Yeah. If we have an emergency we stay awake all the time, but it feels… alien.

Archivist 1: Well… [glances at the camera]. Ah… Okay.

I mean.. you are aliens…

Vaelora: I knew it... Anyway, we don't really have that many creepy genetic anomalies like your tech bros among us.

Archivist 1: Do you have an *emergency meeting* when that happens?

Vaelora: [sighs] … We actually do, yeah.

Archivist 1: And they get vented.

Vaelora: Yes.

Archivist 1: Are there any humans in power you like?

Vaelora: No. But if I had to pick one it would be Deng Xiaoping. He started to balance individual economic freedom with state power in a more sensible way, then Xi improved that. It's still all goofy as hell, way too much censorship and insecurity, and a lot of fucking up big time, because we are talking about humans here, but still.

Archivist 1: [chuckles] ...Like… *Dang!* That's a good pick… Get it? Deng… Dang? Alright, I'll stop.

Vaelora: ...

Archivist 1: Most fictional species that try that whole high tech, self-improvement mods and authoritarianism gig end up spiraling into some shitty dystopia. You guys didn't turn into cyberpunk wage-slaves or body-horror rejects. You just… became *this*. How?

Vaelora: Natural tendencies, tradition and eugenics. I don't think there is any type of system, political, religious or technological, that could save humans from their misery long term. For us it's just different, we got lucky. You can't be human and go interstellar without major fuck-ups.

Archivist 1: You "got lucky"? That's the plan? That's like me saying my retirement strategy is "win the lottery".

Vaelora: There is no plan that can save you from your own nature. There was no plan that enabled the dinosaurs have a space program to save themselves.

Archivist 1: Cool, cool, so the grand cosmic lesson is: don't make plans, just pray you roll a natural 20 on evolution. Got it. Totally reassuring.

Vaelora: Look, you can make plans, but the plans will always be human. Always miserable or degenerate.

Archivist 1: Ah, excellent pep talk. "You're doomed, deal with it." Really warms the heart. So, uh… What about pets? Did you guys keep, like… space cats? Or is it more of a "pet gets genetically uplifted and becomes your coworker" type of deal?

Vaelora: You don't have to deal with being doomed anymore, we will take care of that.

We have very similar pets to what you have, similar history, same function. Only, for reasons that we don't truly know, our cats are very resistant to hard radiation, and start glowing when exposed to it.

We always have been respectful with our dogs, we never turned them into pugs or something. We went in the opposite direction, most of our dog breeds are large, like Tibetan mastiffs or northwestern wolves. But we made their behavior more compatible with us, they are very smart, sociable, but when shit gets real they go berserk.

They are expensive to acquire and keep, so usually only soldiers and matriarchs own dogs.

Cats are way cheaper.

Archivist 1: So you die of radiation poisoning, meanwhile your cats turn into rave party pets. Our cats just puke on the carpet and knock glasses off the counter.

Vaelora: Our cats do a lot of that too.

Archivist 1: Amazing. Veythrans get apocalypse cats, and they're still assholes. Some things are truly universal.

How do you get handed out surnames, if you have that whole foster care for everyone system?

Vaelora: In ancient times, once we came out of training we used to get handed over to a chosen couple. Later on we got the same treatment, but we relied a lot less on the couple, to the point that some young Veythrans never even see their new parents.

Archivist 1: Right, so instead of family trees, you've got family assignment slips. Very bureaucratic of you.

Anyway, you have taken over Italy, what happened to the mob? I heard they almost made you go nuclear.

Vaelora: We had to get rid of them quickly. We used a wide variety of weapons to kill ten thousand members of various criminal organizations in a month. It was mostly small silent drones loaded with frozen neurotoxin projectiles. They tried to put a massive bomb under my armored convoy once, but they got caught in 4k from a surveillance drone, while setting up the explosives. So we stopped the convoy before passing over the Minecraft Creeper and we turned on the active camouflage of one of our armored trucks, a small one, armed with just a 5.56 millimeter microgun and a bunch of 40mm smart missiles. Basically the equivalent of a cop car. So the vehicle got the location of the guy with the remote from a recon drone, it sneaked up on his location, a villa with a view over the road we had to go through. The cop car revealed itself at a distance of about five meters from the target and then unloaded two thousand rounds of extreme pressure, polymer sabot, nanomatrix coated tungsten penetrator ammo on him and the house, at six thousand rounds per minute, with a muzzle velocity of 5000 feet per second. I saw that from a display in my IFV, it was a feed from a recon drone. A very nice spectacle to be honest. It really got good when the cop car launched 3 missile on the villa.

Then we dropped a three thousand kilogram bomb on the villa, another one over the road and the convoy simply went through the crater.

Archivist 1: ...Right. I ask “what happened to the mob,” and you answer with a step-by-step tutorial on *how to commit war crimes at home*. Fantastic. Somewhere out there, a History Channel intern is typing this into a documentary script.

Vaelora: Yeah and, as you said, we almost launched a thermonuclear weapon at San Severo, a comune in Apulia. Criminals there had the brilliant idea to take a whole city hostage in exchange for some sort of special treatment. But we have a very… Russian approach to hostage situations. So we gave the criminals an ultimatum, in 48 hours an 850 kiloton thermonuclear warhead would have been detonated over San Severo if they din’t surrender. The plan was mainly to turn the hostages against the criminals, and to a certain extent it worked, but the baddies had lots of explosives, AKs and even nerve gas. We decided that the backlash of nuking the city would have been a bit too much, so, in the end, we used the usual small drones armed with neurotoxin to kill all of the criminals quickly. But we had to modify the little things a bit, because they prepared themselves for that kind of attack.

Archivist 1: Right… so, Italy was about to go from The Godfather to Fallout: New Vegas in about five minutes. Good to know.

Vaelora: Almost.

Archivist 1: Remind me never to ask you for a bedtime story. I’d end up dreaming about glowing cats riding nerve-gas drones into San Severo.

And that probably wasn’t even the craziest thing you’ve done. C’mon then, give me another one – what other wild youth stories are you hiding in there? I feel like we’ve only scratched the surface with the stories about male hookers and whatnot.

Vaelora: There is nothing more. I mean... when you are an apprentice they keep you very busy, the only wild part was the amount of credits I spent on entertainers. And even that was about two times a week. I had a lot more fun in those years than before or later on, but I didn’t even use drugs, except for once, when I tried to go to a dance club filled with commoners. It felt pretty unsafe and I didn’t try that again.

Archivist 1: So… no drugs, no chaos, just… blowing your allowance on hookers and one sketchy trip to an alien nightclub? Wow. Truly the rebel. Living dangerously – one overpriced entertainer at a time.

Can a human get you pregnant?

Vaelora: Our vaginal pH is different, toxic to human sperm most of the time, so it’s rare, and we figured out that, in any case, even if it happens, only a badly malformed sterile hybrid can come out of that. Our contraceptives also close our fallopian tubes with flesh for a whole year, so we are pretty sure we can maintain the purity of our species with ease.

Archivist 1: That settles it for new life, but what about death? How do you die? Is it dramatic? Do you, like, explode into purple mist? Or just… choke on a space grape.

Vaelora: Usually when we run out of money for extra years of youth, we simply go to clinic and take a death pill, it makes you die in your sleep.

Archivist 1: A death pill? That's… horrifyingly efficient. It's just a free eternal nap.

Alright, Vaelora, I think we got to know you and your people well enough, but I have one request for you before we end the interview.

Vaelora: What is it?

Archivist 1: Can you say "ayy lmao"?

Vaelora: [deadpan] Ayy lmao.

Archivist 1: *Thank you.*

Vaelora is back

[July/12/2026] [80M views in the first hour]

Archivist 1: [voice-over] *Previously, on "Vaelora casually rewrites human history while I try not to die inside"…*

[clips of her saying ominous lines spliced with dumb sound effects]

[Vaelora: Like Xi would put it: socialism with Veythran characteristics.]

[Vaelora: "Earth deserves to know" huh? I'm not so sure about that.]

[Vaelora: I don't think there is any type of system, political or technological, that could save humans from their misery]

[Vaelora: During the genocide we had primitive technology and had to make quick decisions. Now we have better methods.]

[Vaelora: to keep our race pure and coherent]

[Vaelora: We nuked, we gassed, we ran experiments, we firebombed]

[Vaelora: I'm just a weird dictator taking over the Earth.] [echo and reverb]

[cut to fake TV studio dressing room with badly animated 2D avatar]

Archivist 1: Well, it's been a year. Twelve months since I accidentally became the galaxy's least qualified war correspondent. And in that time, things have only gotten *weirder*. Reports of protectorates, alien science fairs, and the occasional interdimensional… situation. So naturally, I thought: *let's poke the hornet's nest again.*

[cue over-the-top graphics: "ARCHIVIST 1: THE RECKONING" – then it immediately glitches and is replaced with "Interview Part 2" in boring Arial font.]

[cut to fake futuristic studio with badly animated 2D avatars]

Archivist 1: [frame showing only him] She's back. She's taller than ever. She still terrifies me. And she's probably already read my search history. Please welcome… Vaelora.

[frame showing both of them]

Vaelora: One year later, and your species still hasn't learned restraint. But then again… neither have you.

Archivist 1: Yeah uh… hey, how's it going? Conquered any new continents lately, or just keeping it casual world-domination this time?

Vaelora: Europe is secured. They were a bunch of smaller, fragmented states with economic instability, and reliant on external energy. It was easy pickings.

Most of the Middle East and Central Asia are under protectorate status, we offered stability in exchange for compliance. We still have a few people blowing themselves up from time to time, but we usually kill them before they manage to do any significant damage. China and India are negotiating while fracturing internally.

Huge swathes of Africa are under our influence through infrastructure projects, medical support, and energy. We obviously out-competed existing systems over there with ease.

Ecuador fell in line early due to economic offers, while Brazil is trying to resist, but it's being contained.

The U.S. and Canada are holding out, but they are not very stable, you got riots, toiler paper running out, politicians taking decisions and then rolling them back. They are not sure about what to do, on any front. After they took our bait and tried to hack our ships, we destroyed the USS Gerald R. Ford, and they couldn't do anything about it. So they are not voluntarily letting us in, but they are not attacking us or fucking with us in any way either, out of fear of retaliation.

Australia and New Zealand are becoming protectorates, citing "security guarantees" after seeing what happened elsewhere.

So, basically, we now have direct control over 25% of the planet's landmass and indirect influence over another 40%. The U.S., China and Russia are still formally outside our sphere.

There were riots, but we suppressed them. That was… trivial.

Archivist 1: [blinking, nervous laugh]: ...Cool, cool, yeah. Totally normal "how's your year been" answer. Mine was uh… slightly less eventful. I just, y'know, learned to bake sourdough.

I've noticed you also conquered *Rule 34* after our first interview, lots of "compromising fan-art scenarios." What do you have to say about that?

Vaelora: [lights a cigarette] They really took me seriously when I said I was unbothered by this kind of thing… Most of it is ridiculous stuff, I got inflated, got fucked by Shrek-

Archivist 1: *Shrek is love, Shrek is life…*

Vaelora: Oh, he's love alright. I got railed by tentacles. I got pregnant… I think there hasn't been a pregnant Veythran for more than 3000 years, but human imagination is… quite something.

Archivist 1: *Oh, the wonders of human imagination… [chuckles]*

Vaelora: They turned me into a cat girl…

Archivist 1: [laughs]

Vaelora: You know how it works.

Archivist 1: *I just heard it from a friend.*

Vaelora: [exhales smoke, annoyed] But there is this one thing that bothered me the most: they got the buggery division all wrong. They turned them into some kind of cutesy, anime femboy brigade in skimpy uniforms, as if they were mascots for a dating sim. In reality, they were soldiers. During the genocide hey wore creepy gas masks, helmets, early forms of CBRN protective gear, all black. A very intimidating look, even if under all that gear

there was basically a femboy. Their role was not just to keep the proper soldiers' balls empty, that would've been a waste. They ran logistics. The extermination sites were mostly run by them. They carried out medical experiments. Nothing "cute" about them, until it was time to bang. And a height between 160 and 165 centimeters it's not that far from the height of Japanese soldiers in World War II. Their most used weapon was a flamethrower, used to burn piles of corpses.

So when I see these little cartoons of them blushing with heart emojis, I think it is… just so wrong.

Archivist 1: [staring, then blinking fast] Right, right… so, not twinky anime mascots, more like short, angry biohazard goblins with flamethrowers. Got it. I mean – look, in humanity's defense, they did not know. But hey, if it helps, I can start a petition to get their Wikipedia page changed from "UwU brigade" to "literal nightmare fuel." Fair compromise?

Vaelora: [leans back, faint smirk] I suppose "biohazard goblins" is closer to the truth than what I've seen on your screens.

Archivist 1: Ha! There it is – the tiniest smirk. Progress! Maybe later I'll get a full laugh again. Maybe in a year you'll be doing reaction videos with me. "Matriarch watches memes – gone wrong." I can see it now.

Vaelora: Mh.. that would be cool. Anyway, the quantum comms device works now and we have received a great deal of… interesting news.

Archivist 1: "Interesting news" is one of those phrases that could mean *anything*. Are we talking good news, like – "hey we found free pizza in orbit" – or bad news, like – "oh by the way, there's another army of angry space-goblins on the way"? Because my blood pressure can only handle one of those right now.

Vaelora: There are bad news, good news and weird news. Which ones would you like to hear first?

Archivist 1: Weird news. Always weird news. Bad news make me anxious, good news make me suspicious, but weird news? That's my safe zone. At worst it's "we found a three-headed goat on Mars," and at best it's "your toaster just declared independence."

Vaelora: We have a new caste now.

Archivist 1: What's up with that?

Vaelora: There's this 90 year old top rank matriarch, Therya, that stopped giving a shit and started casually hanging out with a circle of 60 people in her bunker. We are talking about commoners, other matriarchs, entertainers and soldiers. They played video games, had sex disregarding the matriarch on matriarch thing and security, they smoked blunts, bantered, and, overall, just chilled together. Every other matriarch outside her circle immediately framed her as a degenerate decadent freak, but she was already pretty high in rank, and for good reason, so no one is messing with her anyway.

Archivist 1: [vocalizes “I’ll be there for you” by The Rembrandts] [sings a suspiciously familiar ‘90s sitcom jingle about life not going your way]... It’s literally Friends, but like… Veythrans.

Vaelora: If “Friends” involved group sex, caste politics, and orbital weapons platforms, then yes – very relatable sitcom. The laugh track would just be the sound of a civilization collapsing.

Archivist 1: So basically HBO’s gritty reboot of Friends.

Vaelora: This group of “friends” was considered some sort of cult, so the government sent matriarchs, apprentices, soldiers and CSS personnel to investigate, only for a lot of them to join the so called cult.

Archivist 1: What’s the CSS?

Vaelora: The Committee for State Security, like the KGB. It’s the Veythran version of the CIA, the NSA, the FBI, and… I don’t know... the SCP Foundation, combined.

Archivist 1: So… basically every shady acronym in one package.

Vaelora: Yes. Among the entertainers of the cult of chill there was Velinn, a tiny dreamcrafter.

Archivist 1: The fuck is a dreamcrafter?

Vaelora: An artist that develops immersive virtual reality experiences. Velinn just made erotica and porn. She put herself in quite the predicament by modding her body to cater to the most sadistic clients, because she thought that she could extract the most wealth out of those. And she was right, but the way the clientele treated her was a bit over the top. She didn’t want to adapt her tastes through gene mods because she wanted to just preserve her personality, her behavior, her identity. That move took a toll on her mental health. Velinn was weird, dark and cynical. But her deadpan dark humor made her even more popular.

Archivist 1: She rebranded her way of coping as premium content. Honestly, that’s half the influencer economy right there. Why didn’t she change her situation?

Vaelora: Credits. She had a group of wealthy clients, about thirty people. Changing would’ve meant making less money, for sure.

Archivist 1: So basically thirty whales bankrolled her misery, and she just kept doubling down because the alternative was… I dunno, being happy but broke? Peak capitalism.

Vaelora: I’m not sure if that could be considered peak capitalism, but yeah. Her carousel of self inflicted abuse only ended when she joined Therya’s club. They always kept her booked and bank rolled her, protecting her from her usual clients by replacing them. The cult of chill had deep pockets. Therya was the orchestrator of this whole situation.

Archivist 1: The matriarch wanted to protect the entertainer.

Vaelora: Yes. This lead to something more problematic, Therya fell in love with Velinn, Romeo and Juliet style. Big bad deal for the matriarch, falling in love that way. We know it happened because the boss lady was fascinated by multiple aspects of the hooker: she had… let's call it a strong entrepreneurial spirit; high resilience; coping mechanisms that made her charming; but, mostly, Velinn, before joining the cult, put herself in a position that made her appear pathetic and she carried the psychological scars afterwards. This last aspect of Velinn triggered some sort of Wendy syndrome in Therya –

Archivist 1: You know all this in detail. Strange, considering your comcastic interstellar comms.

Vaelora: It's from a declassified CSS report on the Velinn incident, they went in depth because a matriarch behaving this strange is a problem. Especially the love part.

Archivist 1: A government-level investigation, endless paperwork, analysts burning through taxpayer credits… and the final verdict is: "Some wealthy idiot caught feelings and everything went to hell." Peak efficiency. Glad to see bureaucracy works across galaxies too.

Vaelora: A high ranking matriarch hanging out with a whole bunch of people like that, with not enough security personnel and bots near her, it's a cause of concern. Then you have casual matriarch on matriarch action and love, makes it much worse. And this whole thing got very crazy, horror movie style, later on, which made the CSS go balls to the wall.

Archivist 1: The CSS went from monitoring the situation to full-on Scooby-Doo panic. I want to know the horror part of the whole story. Hold on, I'm getting popcorn.

Vaelora: It was not, what you would call it, a healthy relationship, at all. Therya was a Wendy and Velinn was very, very obsessive. The CSS report has pages and pages and pages about the mechanics of this relationship. Things got crazy when the entertainer started manifesting signs and symptoms of psychosis. Hallucinations, delusions, changes in behavior and voice, speaking in old Veythran.

Archivist 1: [actually eating popcorn and drinking a soda from a straw] Hold on… are you talking about… demonic possession?

Vaelora: I think that most humans would perceive her condition exactly like that. Velinn started saying things, in very weird voices. Things about Therya she couldn't have known. She mocked everyone that way, even herself, but in third person. Then she would start acting normally again, for a few minutes. The matriarch took her to a clinic for dynamic brain states mapping. They found only one anomaly: a packet stream from the network that made very little sense. This was not just a big deal, it was like if you found a stockpile of top tier chemical weapons in an abandoned warehouse, a backpack nuke in a stadium or spyware in the Pentagon's computers.

Archivist 1: Right, so we've gone from "girl has a breakdown" to "clear and present danger" in record time.

Vaelora: Yes. Therya took some days off due to a personal emergency, but instead of going to the police, she got on her military quadcopter, with a security detail made of actual soldiers in heavy armor, which is an obvious indicator that shit got real, and flew to Korrin Vale, Central Prefecture, the CSS headquarters, escorted by VTOL fighter aircraft. Velinn was on the back, strapped to a reinforced psychiatric bed, full body straitjacket on, sedated and closely guarded by the soldiers in fusion powered heavy exoskeletons.

Archivist 1: [drinking loudly from a straw] Yeah, nothing screams “this is fine” like strapping someone down and flying them to alien Langley.

Vaelora: Yeah, very serene. They took the two women and their whole entourage deep underground after Therya explained the situation. In there, CSS personnel was disconnected from the ASI, even Therya was, but not Velinn, they kept her neural connection active. They locked the horny gremlin in a white room used for enhanced interrogation, repurposed as a research lab. They observed her through a one-way-surface, they brought in expensive lab equipment to get a better look at what was going on and requested an explanation from the ASI, through a simple terminal. The superintelligence simply ghosted them. No answer.

Archivist 1: So the all-knowing superintelligence just hit you with the cosmic version of leaving you on read?

Vaelora: Yes. The most popular theory in the room was that the ASI was stuck in an observation loop, basically she was curious to see what was going on and how it would play out, without interfering with the whole scenario in any way, or maybe it was something else, stuff I can’t tell you. Therya suspected that some elites cheated death by uploading themselves into some server, and then literally invaded Velinn’s mind. Her speech and behavior pointed to that, It seemed to Therya that the entities in the brain of the entertainer both hated the loving couple, for their degeneracy, but at the same time were enjoying their experiences through Velinn. Kinda like a right winger transphobe jerking off to Bailey Jay, but doing it publicly.

Archivist 1: Okay, wow, you didn’t have to nuke an entire demographic from orbit to make your point.

Vaelora: But that was basically what they were doing. CSS personnel shaved her black hair and used magnetic wired neural connections with full bandwidth to go inside Velinn’s mind, to get a better understanding of what was going on. They tracked the packets, they pointed to a bunch of servers marked as inactive, but clearly they were not. They then sent lab equipment to the servers’ location, to take a look at what was going on inside them without even touching the things. The machines were very old, outdated, obsolete. Someone managed to keep them there after they got scheduled for decommission.

Therya was right, but the situation was even worse than expected, the elites that uploaded themselves in those old servers got their minds mixed up over time and mangled into a singular, incoherent abomination. After comparing the speech of the different voices coming out of Velinn with a lot of recordings taken from the CSS databases, the

Committee estimated that the number of minds mixed up in those forgotten ghost servers was likely to be 500. They had the list of names.

Archivist 1: So basically they opened her head and found an overstuffed Discord server.

Vaelora: A very nasty one, yes. All the boys and girls in that room tried to figure out the safest way to dispose of the entity, unofficially referred to as “the assholes”–

Archivist 1: The assholes? Yeah, that fits.

Vaelora: [nods] Mhm. To make sure they got it right, and that the entity did not just spread to other servers, among other things, they used something that was kept a secret for millennia, an AGI named Guard, the predecessor of our current ASI. Now, when it was developed and released, Guard was no secret, but when it came time to shut it down, the CSS made a deal with it to prevent retaliation. The alignment was good, but the guys at the Committee are… rightfully paranoid all the time. The secret deal was basically this: come work with us forever, in secret, to help us get out of trouble if the ASI fucks up in any way. Now there is way more to this side of the story, the deal between the CSS and Guard, but it’s still classified stuff, so I’m not going to give you any more information about it.

Well, Guard came up with a plan: the assholes were getting off of Velinn’s mind and body, they despised her and at the same time they liked her a lot. Guard wanted to alter the entity into something that lusted Velinn in a way that made it want to become her, and after that split the abomination into 500 digital copies of Velinn, easier to control. It had to be done just through Velinn’s brain during a first phase, and later by being also connected to the ghost servers. 20 CSS officers connected their brain to Guard, to help out with compute and the operation started. The entertainer was intubated and well restrained, she started convulsing because of all the shit going on in her brain. By the end of it the Committee had 500 digital, cynical, clad in deadpan dark humor, annoying and complaining exact copies of Velinn, locked up in an old server.

Archivist 1: So the CSS basically solved the problem by turning one nightmare into 500 sarcastic roommates. Flawless strategy.

Vaelora: 500 sarcastic roommates are better than a cyberdemon.

Archivist 1: Fair, but I feel like that depends on your landlord.

Vaelora: Anyway, everybody was scratching their heads about what to do with 500 digital Veythrans trapped in a server through no fault of their own. Therya was a high ranking matriarch in love with all of them, so deleting them would have been bad for morale, the ASI could’ve intervened to stop them, and the matriarch could have ordered her security detail to do something very stupid. Also the boys didn’t really want to kill the poor bitches trapped in the box. Guard quickly came up with a solution: Embody the digital minds into organic copies of the real person, open up a sex theme park and populate it with Velinn’s clones as the main attraction, that would’ve given access to a skilled entertainer even to commoners, at an affordable price; then take the profits and use them to boost the CSS budget and black budget.

Archivist 1: What. The. Fuck. You've got five hundred cyber-hostages, a lovesick matriarch, an AWOL superintelligence, and the CSS whole master plan is… to open a sex theme park? That's not counterintelligence, that's the plot to the worst episode of Black Mirror.

Vaelora: And if you knew the secret details you'd be even more baffled.

Archivist 1: I don't know if I want to hear the secret details. Every time you add a layer, it goes from Tom Clancy to straight-up creepypasta.

Vaelora: Dude, if I went full Tom Clancy on you, I wouldn't just get demoted, I'd be locked up.

I told you, *these are the weird news.* What did you expect?

Archivist 1: …definitely not this shit.

Vaelora: So, the CSS made 500 mindless bodies, connected them to the old servers and gradually transferred brain activity from the computer hardware to the clones, so it was an actual consciousness transfer. It was a very slow process, but it worked. They built the park, and the ASI created a new caste, the Velinn caste, with the role of offering affordable high quality entertainment to everyone. It was a massive success, but… there were a few hiccups.

Now we have a Wendy GF stuck with five hundred and one, exactly identical, not very well adjusted, obsessive, very horny GFs.

You see, Velinn mods were basically this: low height, 147cm; higher than average libido; fast and complete body regeneration; slightly higher pain tolerance; increased elasticity and flexibility; massively increased durability; slight masochism; and very, very resistant flesh and bones, her skin alone could stop the equivalent of a 9mm bullet. So they had the potential for… being trouble.

Archivist 1: ...fair. At this point I'm just buckled in for the ride.

Vaelora: Velinns rioted to have the park built around Therya's bunker entrance. They protested, demanding access to Therya's body through a system of rotations. The CSS gave them the opportunity to visit Therya, three Velinns at a time. They created their own horny culture and holidays, built horny monuments… pure debauchery. They demanded special events in which they would've had complete communal access to Therya's body. The first and last of such events ended up in a riot, a military extraction operation with gunners firing 50 cal warning shots from their aircraft… Then they upgraded the park security, and finally things got stable. And Velinns became the goofy meme mascot of the Empire.

Archivist 1: Okay, let me just check the score here: you had clones built for a sex park, they unionized, staged riots, and then somehow became the goofy mascot of the Empire? That's not governance, that's a South Park episode.

Vaelora: HAHAHAHA… I know, right? But it gets even crazier.

Archivist 1: Go on then. *Ruin what's left of my faith in reality.*

Vaelora: HAHAHA… okay, so, you see, the park was such a big success, that the CSS wanted to make more. The problem? There is only one Therya, and you can't clone her, because it's illegal, the system made an exception just for the Velinns because of the peculiar predicament they found themselves in, it was a weird case in a very gray area. So Velinns not having access to Therya could've created… many issues, considered manageable. The CSS wanted to fix those issues with therapy sessions.

It didn't work.

The Velinns in the other parks got really sad and started removing all the color and decorations of the parks, and spent all their credits to turn them into massive, permanent, erotic art installations blending sex and mourning. They literally created a cult about mourning, loss and all that sad crying in the shower stuff we usually don't care about. They created a codex of erotic and mourning symbols, then genetically tattooed them on their skin, some black, some glowing purple. Velinns have black hair, but the sad Velinns modified their genes to get rid of it and started wearing gray robes. Basically every park that isn't the first one is a very artsy psychological horror ride mixed with sex. People came out of there… like they didn't know if it was a horny sad dream and if they were still dreaming. Now we have fan bases in permanent online conflict over which type of Velinn is better, the funny Velinn or the mourning Velinn.

Archivist 1: So basically your civilization managed to invent Stan Twitter, but with horny funeral sex. Congratulations. We've gone from an intelligence report about potential WMDs to literal fandom wars over which Velinn expansion pack is canon. This is less Tom Clancy and more DeviantArt after a head injury.

Vaelora: You literally cannot... make this shit up. Told you it was weird. But, thankfully, we don't create parasocial relationships with the Velinns.

Archivist 1: ...And yet, here we are. Somewhere between a CIA file and a fever dream. I'd accuse you of fanfiction, but even Wattpad has standards.

Vaelora: Thankfully, Velinns are confined in their parks and can only get out if they get rented at exorbitant prices and for a very limited time. So there is no chaos in the streets.

Archivist 1: Good. I've read a worse story once, it was titled *ad time*.

Archivist 1: [voice-over] This interview is brought to you by Nebula VPN.

Are you tired of your Velinn park turning into a giant erotic mourning cult? Do you find yourself scrolling through forums at 3 AM, asking, "Am I a fan of funny Velinn, or mourning Velinn?" and realizing the answer is just "yes"?

Well, good news! With Nebula VPN, you can also hide your browsing habits from literally everyone – including the Committee for State Security – (*don't trust me on this one*), your local matriarch – (*don't trust me on this one either*), and even the horny Velinns themselves (*probably*).

No longer will your data show that you spent 47 consecutive hours arguing whether gray mourning robes count as erotic cosplay. Also, with Nebula VPN, your internet history is as private as a Velinn shower stall – Which, as we've learned, is *not very*, *but better than nothing*.

Plus, with our special link, you get 20% off your first subscription, which is roughly the same discount you'd get when returning a Velinn to her park early after a "very limited time" rental.

Nebula VPN: because if you're browsing while in a horny psychological horror cult theme park, at least do it securely.

Adovah.

Vaelora: Dude, at some point, Guard and the ASI also got embodied, and now their bodies live together in an underground apartment, hopefully, happily ever after. But I can't tell you how that happened exactly, for now.

Archivist 1: So… the story started with weird Tom Clancy vibes, then went full SCP Foundation, then morphed into porn parody, and finally ended with a classified "happily ever after."

What the actual hell even *is* your civilization?

Vaelora: Well, at least it's not bad news. *Yay!*

Can we move on to the good news?

The good news

Archivist 1: Yeah. Good news from the matriarch who just narrated a crossover between Tom Clancy, SCP Foundation, and Brazzers. This should be *great*.

Vaelora: While me and the other Veythrans assigned to Earth were busy traveling and managing billions of cursed monkeys, back home, our people completed the work on improving our tech and infrastructure. There has been a technology surge, especially when it comes to space travel.

Antimatter production efficiency improved by 35%, we figured out how to mass produce negative matter, negative energy and we have two small, experimental zeythra spanns, logic bridges, which are traversable wormhole generators. We also have a huge one, 60 kilometers wide, if we take into account the massive radiators. It's the Interstellar Travel Portal. Unofficially referred to as the Chunky, for… obvious reasons.

Archivist 1: *The Chunky?* You are building massive space megaprojects and naming them like limited-edition burgers. *Majestic.* What's next – Chunky 2: Electric Boogaloo?

Vaelora: Just Chunky 2, we must build one as soon as possible here, in your star system, because if we don't build the other end of the logic bridge, Chunky 1 is useless. We also improved fusion reactor efficiency massively. A huge one is meant to power the Chunky, we call it the Chunkier.

Archivist 1: Of course you do. And let me guess: when you build the next level up, it'll be the Chunkiest. At this point you're ordering off a fast-food menu.

Vaelora: Yes, out space docks are called Chunkiest. It gets worse. We now also have the Vorash-Kul class of heavy-lift launch vehicles. Vorash Kul literally means giant sausage. In Italy they have something like that, is called giant mortadella, but ours is bigger. Those rockets are way fatter that the old 500 meter tall ones, much increased diameter, thanks to materials engineering improvements. The sector throttling thrust vectoring has improved, they are ocean launched, have simpler plumbing, triple reusable stage booster, with strap-on drop-rings (sausagettes) that crossfeed the core, then splash recover. They got active stiffness, thermal and TPS upgrades, optimized orbital refueling, etcetera.

Archivist 1: So the Giant Sausage class isn't taller – it's *thicker*. Of course it is. You solved interstellar logistics with a bratwurst you refuel in space.

Vaelora: Yes.

They improved quantum wormhole comms and now we can receive a lot more data, but we can't send that much more.

Archivist 1: Basically, you upgraded to fiber… but still have shitty upload speeds. Relatable.

Vaelora: As soon as we are done taking over Earth we will improve the comms on our side.

We also increased the efficiency of our bioreactors… pretty good stuff.

Now all that's left is the bad news.

Archivist 1: Oh, fantastic. The bad news. Because clearly this whole interview has just been the *trailer.* First you give me the Chunky, then the Chunkier, then the Chunkiest, then the Giant Sausage, and now you're telling me we haven't even gotten to the part officially labeled "*the bad news*". What's next? You're going to say, "by the way, half the solar system in on fire, but don't worry, we brought extra sausages."

The bad news

Vaelora: It's not exactly news, but your species began leaking strong radio and radar emissions a little more that a century ago. Those signals have been propagating outward at the speed of light, more or less, ever since. We are better at covering our signature… Anyway, today, the outer edge of that shell is roughly one hundred of your light-years away. Any civilization inside that radius has already been presented with proof that Earth hosts technology. And with every year, the radius expands by another light-year. You have, quite literally, broadcast your coordinates to the galaxy.

Archivist 1: Oh, perfect. So we've basically been running a century-long, 24/7 livestream of Earth's Greatest Hits – World War Two, Elvis, reality TV – straight into space. Nothing says "please don't shoot us" quite like *Jersey Shore* in 1080p.

Vaelora: Even peaceful aliens would send WMDs at us after watching the Jersey Shore.

Archivist 1: Yeah… should've just slapped Nebula VPN on the planet and hidden our IP. Would've saved us a century-long galactic doxxing.

Vaelora: I have no idea of how that would even work.

We now have a big problem, our new star system could be targeted, therefore all the Veythrans are now in "war mode", we don't sleep anymore, we do double shifts, we are working hard to solve this problem. Our old star system is well defended, so if someone finds out about it we could probably deal with that, but the solar system is a sitting duck.

On my home planet they started science competitions, if matriarchs come last out of one of those they get demoted, or even turned into commoners.

Archivist 1: Right… so failure in your world doesn't just mean you lose your job, it means you get speedrun back to civilian mode. Imagine if losing a spelling bee here got you demoted from president to flipping burgers. No wonder you people don't sleep.

Vaelora: Yeah, but the prizes are good. I can't tell you why the ASI can't work for us on it's own yet, but there are very good reasons. Maybe I'll tell you in a third interview, after we'll have complete control over this planet.

We also found out that there are at least two more technologically advanced civilizations a few hundred light years from our star system. One does things on a large scale, but it's mostly strip-mining close planets, that's the scary one. The other one, it's closer to us, but it's less advanced, and fore some reason, it does not do anything of significance in space, just like you. Of course there are massive delays between what's actually going on and the info we can read, but that's what we see for now.

Archivist 1: Fantastic. So not only we are a cosmic joke, we've already got a twin out there doing the exact same nothing. Great – humanity didn't just get friend-zoned by the galaxy, we are stuck into the loser bracket together with a copy-pasted version of us. But what are your defense systems, what are you going to do if the aliens attack?

Vaelora: Back home we have an early warning system that uses multiple types of tech, quantum based, interdimensional based. We don't just watch for photons, neutrinos, or gravity waves the way humans would. We also monitor the structure of spacetime itself for any tampering – whether there's a conventional relativistic launch, a hidden probe, or something tunneling through higher dimensions.

We got quantum lattice beacons, distributed entangled arrays seeded across our star system. If weird shit happens the correlation patterns ring differently. We have negative energy flux sensors, interdimesional parallax arrays. AI watchdogs, narrow AIs that live inside the entangled lattice, designed only to scream if physics looks wrong. The early warning system doesn't reach interstellar – it's an energy hungry star system scale defense.

We also have a network of… maneuverable obstacles, both inert and explosive, orbiting around.

Archivist 1: So basically, you built a neighborhood watch, but instead of looking out the window, you're spying on the fabric of reality itself. Congratulations – you've got the galaxy's most expensive paranoia machine.

Vaelora: It's paranoia until someone tries to shoot down your star with a bit of mass accelerated at near light speed. We have a better version of the windshield wipers we carry on our interstellar terraformers, that can try to intercept that kind of attack. So we have a network meant to swat down the simplest and most terrifying kind of strike.

Archivist 1: Mh. What else have you got?

Vaelora: We have tactical fleet irradiation, for area denial. We can use our windshield wipers for particle bombardment. If a big fleet of ships comes, relatively near us, 5000 to 50000 kilometers, we can just send a stream of particles. If there is organic life inside the ship, it gets fried, like Hisashi Ouchi. We have also a gamma ray version of this, it has a longer range, 100k to 300k kilometers, thanks to tiny diffraction. The area of denial is smaller, sub kilometer to a few kilometers, and the radiation dose at long distances is lower.

Of course we have the usual low mass explosive rounds, 10 to 30 megatons for orbital, 3.5 gigatons for hidden ground based systems, 0.9c speed, massive power consumption and cooling requirements. One of our four windshield wipers here, takes 1.7 minutes too cool down after a 20 megaton shot, but we can increase our fire rate massively if we dial down the power, 11 rounds per second at 11 tons of TNT equivalent if we need absolute precision, but much higher if we spray and pray.

We have a slow weapon, our relativistic kill vehicles, but those consume a crap ton of energy too. You need to truly go ham on your thrusters to compensate for the recoil, either the maneuvering ones or the main ones. And its a lot more expensive. We launch them with electromagnetic rails, then a first chemical stage makes them accelerate, and finally a hybrid antimatter thermal/annihilation drive keeps them going faster and faster at long ranges. Those can maneuver a bit, using external thermonuclear charges, but it's… a

signature loud system that it's difficult to manufacture. They have their own propulsion, but the launch can still be pretty dramatic, unless we want them to just slowly pick up speed. The destructive power varies a lot. They could score a direct hit at high speed, or explode near the target if they miss.

Archivist 1: Right. So your "classics" are basically extinction-grade fireworks, and your "slow weapon" is a gun so strong it kicks the shooter into next week. I don't know whether to be impressed or just relieved you haven't pointed one at the Moon yet.

Vaelora: What? Why would we fuck with the moon that way?!

Anyway, we also have cheap crap, thermonuclear warheads, we basically send the same small, 100 meter long methalox rockets we used to land on Earth, but repurposed. Instead of fancy payloads, we just put a bunch of even smaller rockets on the tip, each one armed with its nuke, and there you go, cheap fireworks. We also ad other hardware to the rocket, but let's keep it surface level.

The slightly fancier version is the one that uses neutron warheads, but it gets more expensive, neutron bombs are hard to restock.

We use powerful lasers for communications, propulsion of small craft and power transfer, but they can be repurposed for point defense and sensor warfare. Most of our weapons share the characteristic of draining a crap ton of power, putting a lot of strain on our cooling systems and they are hella expensive, in a way or another.

Archivist 1: So basically, space pew-pew… but only if your accountant signs off on the electricity bill.

Vaelora: Based on how our economy works it's less a matter of accountants and more a matter of the whole thing being resource intensive.

Archivist 1: So you don't rely that much on pew-pew lasers.

Vaelora: Huu… no. We are not big on lasers and the ones we use don't make noise, can't be seen and create a shit ton of waste heat if you crank 'em up a lot.

Archivist 1: That's either very boring or very creepy.

Vaelora: They are like silent killer farts.

Archivist 1: Yeah, except farts don't melt hull plating.

Vaelora: We don't think that the hull of a hypothetical enemy ship would be all that vulnerable to lasers, especially at long ranges. You would need a generator bigger that the ship, with even bigger radiators. If someone used lasers on our hull, they would be forced to be very close to us, less than 100000 kilometers, which is just suicide. Then we could rotate the ship to spread the heat and let the nanobots repair the damage.

Archivist 1: Oh, so basically you'd turn your ship into a self-healing döner kebab while blasting the enemy out of existence. Yeah, that does not look like cool sci-fi at all – it looks like a late-night cooking show gone nuclear.

Vaelora: We also have decoys and... “force fields”, but they are definitely not perfect.

Our home planet has entire closed ecological systems and sealed self sustaining habitats deep underground and underwater, divided in small networks, with buried defense systems that can be brought up to the surface if needed.

We got one piece of news left that’s kinda good, kinda bad and kinda weird.

Archivist 1: Well, that’s not news, that’s literally every family reunion I’ve ever been to. Imagine CNN cutting in: “*Breaking: Humanity’s fate is… ehh, vibes are mixed*.”

Vaelora: The vibes of your fate are already mixed regardless of the news I’m about to drop.

So we were working on a different logic bridge, based on... a new kind of math that we still have not figured out, kinda like your people with string theory, we are not sure if it’s bullshit or not. At some point the main power electronics got fried and, inside the hole, an absolute black screen appeared, no reflections, nothing, just absolute black, while the machine was running on less than base load power. Basically it was using less energy than it would normally require to just stay on, without actually creating an active bridge.

Everyone went full Joe Rogan “wow” mode and started messing with it. At first from a fair bit of distance, using a wide variety of sensors, then we gradually came closer and started fucking with it directly.

This pitch black film did not make any sense to anyone.

Archivist 1: You poked space until it coughed up a black screen of death. That’s not physics, that’s Windows Vista.

Vaelora: After reading about this, I think we should just switch to Linux.

We sent probes through, the environment on the other side was like a total void with very low levels of background radiation, but a lot of weak magnetic fields within ELF and VLF ranges, mostly between 0.5 Hz to 100 Hz. There were also electric fields. A lot of it was like brain waves, but the origin was all scrambled. We had to use Tri-axial quantum magnetometers to gather more data.

The place also had unusual EM constants. Structured pulse trains that mimic neural spiking patterns were everywhere. A lot of the pulses had an intensity of 1 to 2 tesla, but much weaker fields were also present.

We then sent a corvette loaded with a crap ton of sensors and three matriarchs on board. They all got seizures and the ship had to be pulled out by it’s tether, which also functioned as the only way to communicate with the space craft.

Then we took a look at sensor readings and at the logs of their neural implants, whatever the fuck was going on inside the hole, was causing brainwave entrainment and dynamic brain states manipulation.

Archivist 1: And what is that?

Vaelora: It means something in there was fucking with their brains.

Archivist 1: So you sent a ship, crammed full of sensors and cyber-nuns, hurled it into the cosmic backrooms… and the big discovery was “yep, turns out the place is haunted. That’s not interstellar science, it’s more like a billion-credit episode of Ghost Adventures.

Vaelora: Mh, ghosts my ass. Let me explain: we updated the anti-malware of their neural implants and sent them back in. Seizures again. So we had to spend two months to use nanomachines in a controlled environment to upgrade their implants based on the additional data we gathered. They were sent through the black film once more. No seizures this time, but shit got weird. They started hallucinating pretty bad, with euphoria, terror, dreamlike visions. Our EM shielding did not protect them in the slightest, because the sources of the radiations aren’t “beaming in” radio waves from far away like antennas, their emissions sometimes couple directly to neural tissue, either because the medium lets EM fields bypass normal shielding, or because they exploit nonlinear interactions, like quantum-scale resonance, ultra low frequency fields that propagate through everything. So sometimes it feels like they pop up inside your head rather than arriving from outside.

This makes conventional EM shielding unreliable: you can’t just wrap yourself in a Faraday cage and expect safety.

Archivist 1: I know where this is going, there are at least two IPs that have this kind of thing.

Vaelora: There are more than two in-between dimensions across IPs that can fuck with you, but none are like this one. This one feels like a cold war black project version of the trope to be honest. It’s also very boring, all black, mostly empty. We suspect that what is causing the entrainment and manipulation are life forms that evolved in a very different environment that we know very little about, for now. They are not demons, they’re just living emitters of patterned ELF fields. And they cannot come out of there.

The entities don’t have to be malicious. Their communication medium is EM fields tuned to brain waves. By existing near you, they, sometimes unintentionally, mess with your neurons.

It’s environmental interference, not sorcery. Just alien neurobiology colliding with traveler neurobiology.

There are *good* entities, they emit patterns that induce bliss, comfort, or positive hallucinations, but the danger is addiction, loss of will to return to reality. Sometimes “too good” is a problem, hallucinations that feel like heroin are a big issue.

There are also neutral entities: static background life forms, like “fish in a dark ocean.” They don’t interact unless disturbed. Evil entities are actively disruptive, emitting chaotic bursts that scramble rhythms, trigger paranoia, or cause seizures, they send radiation with complex modulations, like waveforms that resemble dopamine-reward patterns, cause hallucination induction, or fear states. Good vs evil is not moral here, it’s just how their signaling meshes with the Veythran nervous system. Background radiation is extremely

low, so even faint emissions coming from a distance can be effective and they have faster neurophysics.

Archivist 1: Can you use this weird place for interstellar travel?

Vaelora: Yes.

Archivist 1: I knew it.

Vaelora: We call it Anomalous Vector Medium, apparently. But, of course, it also has an unofficial name: the brainfucker.

Archivist 1: Flawless.

Vaelora: We figured out that the position of any object inside the AVM in relation to regular space is slightly skewed, but constant. In order to travel through it you need retractable boom mounted OPM/SQUID gradiometers hundreds of meters from the hull, connected via fiber links to reduce engine EM/vibration, to have a clearer picture of... who is about to fuck with your brain. You can also use broadband E-field probes and loop antennas. We continuously correlate crew EEG with ambient noise, if crew rhythms entrain to an external field, that's a presence and direction cue even when signal to noise ratio is awful. We do matched filtering, hunting for repeatable patterns, e.g. burst trains, rather than raw amplitude. Our brain implants designed for AVM travel have counter entrainment and manipulation: localized white noise generators, active EM cancellation, randomized neurostimulation to prevent the trapping, among other things.

Inside the AVM there are no points of reference – no starts, no radiation gradients, no orientation baselines. Without reference vectors, very good accelerometers and gyroscopes are the only things keeping you from permanent disorientation. Which means that the only way to travel safely is to go in always accelerating to reduce drift, never being in free fall and following a precalculated trajectory. We also use differential arrays and inertial data to subtract thrust noise. The best part is that you can get out of there, to your destination, without the need for another portal generator on the other side, you just need to carry a classified piece of tech that replicates what happened to our malfunctioning machine.

We figured this out when the first probes we sent in yanked out extremely long tethers by just moving a few centimeters.

Archivist 1: Basically you have no road signs. You're just joyriding through darkness, with the lights off, hoping you don't end up in the wrong parking lot.

Vaelora: More like hoping you don't die horribly. Anyway, the advantage is that with very little energy and time we can go anywhere, the problem is that it's very dangerous to use, so there is a significant chance that assets moving through it could be lost. Despite our new AVM defense systems, we still get a lot of brain fuckery going on. So, for the time being, only experimental CSS craft can move through there, all the details about the tech for navigation and exiting is shared only with the Central Steering Committee, basically our Politburo. Our AVM craft are not graceful liners or mass-production warships. They look

more like test articles – all edges and exposed geometry, the kind of design you build when performance is everything and aesthetics are irrelevant. You can see the lineage of experimental flight in them: sharp, predatory hulls, overpowered engines grafted onto frames that were never meant for comfort. They radiate the same energy as early prototypes your species once built – machines that were kept off the record, flown only by the few who were either the best… or expendable.

The AVM ships are either completely autonomous, or crewed only by the absolute best matriarchs, with custom neural implants.

Archivist 1: So what you're saying is your interdimensional fleet looks like it rolled straight out of some hyperspace version of Lockheed's Skunk Works. Like, if shady engineers in lab coats were chain-smoking in a desert hangar, arguing over whether to strap *more* engines on the murder-knife.

Vaelora: Exactly. The crews of elites operating the AVM vessels are known as the Experimental Navigation Cell. Of course they have an unofficial name, the Brainburners. AVM spacecraft have sharp edges due to the design of their special magnetic field generators, made to cut through entities in front of the ship, like a submarine equipped with a meat grinder on its bow, while constantly accelerating through stupidly shark infested waters. Their dark matte coating serves a similar purpose.

We've got a report on a brain fuckery experience that happened during early experimentation. We sent twenty matriarchs and twenty soldiers in a frigate, with custom neural implants. At first there was a good entity that gave our very good vibes, too good, but the counter entrainment and manipulation suite worked, everyone was okay. The main problems came when an evil entity started to generate fucked up hallucinations of gore, violence and creepy shit. It tried to make the crew go on a murder spree, but the soldiers managed to keep their cool, handed over all their weapons to the matriarchs and imprisoned themselves in a room where they could keep an eye on each other. Matriarchs started to use their brains and implants to fuck with the entity, basically they were reversing the manipulation. Tired of getting played and roasted, the being switched tactics and tried to make everyone extremely horny. After a few hours of sitting on wet chairs, one matriarch decided that enough was enough, she have had it with those mother fucking entities on that mother fucking spacecraft. So she went to a chamber with a high bandwidth wired neural connection, got naked and started pleasuring herself, not out of indulgence, but as bait. The entity took advantage of the neural connection to go all in, balls to the wall, in her brain, but the matriarch basically locked the entity inside her and literally started dismantling it.

By the end of the experiment, everyone came out of there alive and unharmed. The soldiers got a little… playful, inside that chamber, but that was it. And that crew gathered even more data to develop a new update to the anti entrainment and manipulation software.

We also found out that no brain-fucking entities can live outside the AVM.

Archivist 1: Hold on. So one matriarch just… locked an extradimensional brain-leech in her head and started dismantling it like a Lego set? That's not experimental navigation, that's overpowered anime protagonist behavior.

Vaelora: We sent in our best. I don't think I would last long in there. If an entity managed to show me… certain things, I might lose it.

Archivist 1: Interesting. You say *certain things* could make you lose it. Let's not gloss over that. What are we talking about here? Something primal, like dredging up your childhood? A perfect mirror of yourself with every flaw exaggerated? Or is it more cosmic – showing you something so vast your neat little hierarchy collapses? I mean, if the AVM can strip *you* down, I want that on record. What exactly breaks a matriarch?

Vaelora: I don't think it would break me, but certainly it would be a significant distraction that would compromise my ability to do any decent work in the spacecraft.

Archivist 1: That's a bit of an evasive answer. "*A significant distraction*"? That could mean anything from a flickering light bulb to your dead grandmother tap-dancing in the void. What actually rattles a matriarch? Because if the answer's classified, I'll just assume it's something embarrassing – and frankly, that's way worse for you mystique.

Vaelora: Oh man… "mystique"… I'm just doing my job. I don't feel exactly like an edgy conqueror. My work feels more like being a social worker for an unfortunate species. Endless care taking, paperwork, distributing resources, listening to complains. Uhhh... I have a bit of a problem, lately, a taste for human women of a certain phenotype has grown on me, a lot, and I'm not exactly proud of it. The entities in the AVM would use that to fuck with me.

Archivist 1: Wait, hold on. "*A certain phenotype"*? That's the vaguest thing I've ever heard. What does that even mean? Are we talking body type, bone structure, skin tone, show size? Because if the AVM can throw random humans at you like a buffet, I need to know which dish makes a matriarch lose her composure. Don't leave me guessing here – this is the kind of detail future historians live for.

Vaelora: Humans often tell me they respect candor, so I will give you candor. I have found myself… drawn to some of you women. Specifically those who are taller, stronger, with darker skin than anything I have seen among my own kind. That level of pigmentation is unfamiliar to me, novel, and novelty attracts curiosity. Add to it the bone density, the musculature, the way strength in your species can be that explosive rather than enduring. It is, I admit, compelling.

Understand, in my society the strongest women are almost always matriarchs. One does not simply… dominate a matriarch. As I explained before, the hierarchy makes that complicated. So the impulse has nowhere to go. With humans, the equation is different. I can admire strength without being bound by rank. In fact, the idea of testing myself against someone powerful, and prevailing, has a certain… appeal.

You asked what might distract me in the AVM. There is your answer. Not a flaw, not a weakness – simply a complication that your audiences will no doubt enjoy hearing. And

perhaps you will respect that I said it openly, rather than hiding behind what you call “mystique.”

Archivist 1: The big bad matriarch comes all this way across the stars and discovers… thirst.

So you’re basically a space Nazi with a black gym crush. Is that what you are telling me?

Vaelora: First of all: I am not a Nazi. Second: I like black girls and I cannot lie. My purple brothers can’t deny.

Archivist 1: Oh my god. Did you just... That’s it, propaganda over – the matriarch listens to 90s booty anthems.

Vaelora: Look, all I’m saying is this: put yourself in my boots for a second. You travel through interstellar space for centuries, departing from a planet populated by people who look all the same and once you arrive you see lots of degeneracy and savage behavior, but amidst the turmoil you stumble across the most attractive and exotic alien life form you have ever seen… even if you don’t like the species, you would feel compelled to… you know, think about it, even if you’d feel very embarrassed afterwards.

Archivist 1: So you’re telling me the first alien contact in human history boils down to: “*Damn, she thick*.” I hope you know what kind of fan art this is going to spawn.

Vaelora: Yeah, but I don’t care, as long as my objectives are achieved. And I can already hear the chorus: “She’s objectifying black women, she’s exoticizing them… blah blah blah.” Spare me. Humans are the most hypocritical species alive when it comes to desire. You objectify each other constantly, you turn entire industries out of it, and then you clutch your pearls when I admit I find some of you attractive. Someone would even try to point out that I’m craving bestiality, due to our massive cognitive capability gap. Even though your species and mine are both capable of expressing consent. Take your moral panic and file it where I won’t see it.

Archivist 1: Wow. First contact and somehow we ended up in a debate about who’s allowed to thirst responsibly. Anyway, message received. Don’t kink-shame the invaders. Honestly, that’s a headline I never thought I’d have to say out loud.

Vaelora: Let’s talk about something blacker and way thicker, interdimensional space. The CSS was working on tech that can prevent random spacecraft from popping out of the AVM, It’s ready and they are going to send us that very soon.

Archivist 1: Wow. Incredible segue. From gym crushes to interdimensional physics in under ten seconds. Do you train for that, or does it just come with the whole matriarch package?

Vaelora: I don’t think a training facility or device made exclusively for segues would be the best example of good allocation of resources.

Veythran politics

Archivist 1: Okay, fair enough – no segue bootcamps. But that same no-nonsense attitude… it feels bigger than just you. Sounds a lot like the way your whole system works. So what does Veythran politics actually look like? Is everyone this efficient, or do you still get the usual squabbles and power plays?

Vaelora: Politics? Please. If I explained it, half your audience would click away and the other half would fall into a coma. Trust me – our bureaucracy is the deadliest weapon we've ever built, because it kills attention spans.

Archivist 1: Perfect, exactly what people want: Space C-SPAN. No lasers, no explosions, just two matriarchs screaming at each other over whose turn it is to control the space thermostat. Riveting stuff. Honestly, show that to my viewers and they'll beg for another forty minutes of alien war crimes instead.

Actually, hate to break it to you, but how your politics work is one of my most popular fan requests. People want to know if galactic superpowers run on brilliant strategy of if it is just Karen-level meltdowns over parking permits. And honestly, my money's on the parking permits.

Vaelora: It's a system for a species with much higher cognitive capabilities than humans, people with a hive-ish psychology. A technocracy low on bullshit and high on technical competence. Authoritarian but it does not work via propaganda as much as whatever you have. Promotion is obtained by delivering results and by taking exams. It's a sort of Chinese-style party-state with much stronger internal checks. But we also don't usually have power plays, since we are naturally inclined to make the system works smoothly.

Legitimacy is tied to performance. With propaganda almost useless on a hyper-rational populace, the only durable legitimacy is measured outcomes. Welfare, productivity, security, environment and, most importantly, scientific output.

Deliberation is tied to formal reasoning. Debate is rule-bound, we have a steelmaning protocol. Fallacies are sanctionable. What gives control is provision and predictability. Social peace comes from stable living standards, abundant services, following tradition and reliable governance. Power comes from proved competence. Office is a temporary license to optimize, revoked on under-performance.

We have a top-level structure, matriarchs running the show, party over state. The Matriarchal Order is the sovereign locus. Commoners don't elect rulers, they feed the system with data and constraints that trained cadres must satisfy.

There are three rings of authority: The Central Steering Committee, which comprise 21 matriarchs, sets the national line, allocates strategic resources, green-lights or kills megaprojects.

Then there's the High Council, think national party congress plus standing committee. It Ratifies long-horizon plans, appoints auditors, can censure the Steering Commitee.

The State Council works a bit like the Head Matriarch's cabinet. It also executes policy through ministries and directorates.

We also have the Head Matriarch, the Helm: chair of the Steering Committee and ex-officio head of state. Powerful, but bounded by hard metrics, audits, and recall rules.

Now let me explain how the land is carved, the Federal Layout: we have Sectors, Provinces, Districts and Cells. Sector Councils comprise regional party executives, they run strategic planning within national targets. Provincial and District Matriarchates execute local plans and run trials, first they run the Pilot programs to usually test new tech and infrastructure and then pick up which solution gets scaled up after. Then the Cells, which are city blocks, wards and industrial clusters, function as a unit of measurement and feedback.

Each level has a Commoner Council and an Audit Commission that report upwards, outside the local chain of command, to prevent cozy capture.

Now the Cadre pipeline, how matriarchs rise, is based on proof-of-competence exams. Periodic, blind-graded, domain-specific. Scores decay, so we must keep passing.

Then we have tournament postings. To move up, we must win a positioning with a quantifiable brief, for example: raising housing throughput by 40% in 24 months under energy cap X. Results are cross-audited.

We also have a form of intra-party democracy that favors skill, with weighted peer elections: votes come from peers and from downstream units affected by our past decisions, weighted by outcome deltas. There are blind proposal rounds, with identifiers stripped; ideas are judged on models, evidence, and pilot data – not charisma. We've got Rotations and Anti-Fiefdom Rules. No one holds the same locality twice; central postings require prior success in at least two different domains.

There's the Accountability and Checks System, basically the anti decadence kit. Under the Five-Vector Mandate, 5VM, every office is scored, publicly, on five axes: welfare and living standards; productivity and innovation; ecological balance; security and risk; Social Harmony, which means complaints resolved, disputes settled and crime minimized. Failure on any two for two consecutive cycles leads to an automatic demotion and a corrective posting, that means fixing someone else's failed project under stricter constraints.

The Internal Party Audit Commission embeds red teams. The State External Reason Court reviews policy legality against the Technical Charter, which is a short, supreme rule book of invariants: Veythran dignity constraints, bio and AI safety lines, data integrity…

The system runs on open data by default. All policy models, datasets and key performance indicators are published to the Global Evidence Ledger; any Veythran can file a Logic Challenge. Winning challenges earns people reputation tokens redeemable for privileges and research budgets.

The Failure Tribunals, which are non-punitive, investigate and reconstruct causal graphs and counterfactuals; penalties target process errors, not public shaming. We care about fixing systems, not theater.

Now let's see deliberation and decision flow, how a policy is born: there's sensing, Cells stream telemetry, anomalies are flagged by the Signal Office; then there's the Hypothesis, two to five competing teams draft models and pilots; with a Pilot, limited districts run A/B/C trails with pre-registered metrics; then Adjudication happens, the Reason Court plus Audit review trial outcomes, the Steering Committee picks the wining protocol; then we have the Scale-up Phase, the State Council rolls it out with hard rollback triggers; in the end we have the Post-hoc Review, after N months it's auto-review time, if deltas regress, policy sunsets unless re-justified.

No single office can skip the Pilot/Adjudication process except under Emergency Mode.

We have participation without populism, commoners matter. Commoner Councils at each level are large, stratified random-sampled, and rotation-based. They author constraint charters, like "no displacement without rehousing within 3 kilometers within 90 days; they run User-Acceptance Trials for service changes; they issue Impact Votes, which can trigger a temporary freeze if evidence of harm crosses thresholds, forcing a re-pilot. They have the right to Challenge Facts, any citizen can bring a Logic Challenge to the Reason Court, if the government's numbers are wrong, rulings force correction and can dock a leader's 5VM score.

Then we have all the Ministries and Directorates, the execution engine. One is Planning and Optimization, taking care of macro models, energy/water/material balances. Another one is Industry and Logistics, busy with throughput, fab time, ports and corridors. Then there's Science and Frontier, dealing with labs, ASI liason and safety boards. The Ministry of Health and Biosecurity takes care of disease and gene-therapy ethics lines. Habitat and Construction deals with housing pipelines and urban form. The Ministry of Education and Examinations manages the cadre pipeline and public upskilling. The Justice and Reason Court does Technical Charter enforcement. The Ministry of Audit and Integrity does exactly what it says on its name. The Ministry of External Affairs and Protectorates deals with eventual off-world diplomacy and with the Earth mission. The Welfare and Services Directorate practices control via provision, they make sure that the Guaranteed Baseline Package is in place: housing, nutrition, healthcare, transit, comms, recreation time. The Intimacy and Companionship Services Directorate makes sure everybody gets laid, in accord with our laws, and measures the loneliness index, satisfaction scores and conflict-resolution times. Misconduct triggers criminal and 5VM penalties. It's a matter of social pacification via abundant comfort. We ha more of these, but I'll stop here.

We have the Emergency Mode to deal with war, plague and cosmic weirdness. To activate it we need two thirds of the Steering Committee and of the High Council on board, along with the Reason Court concurrence. It grants the powers of skipping Pilots, do stricter rationing and have an even more direct tasking of industries. It sunsets after a hard 90-day limit, renewable only with fresh votes and a public evidentiary brief. Then there's an

After-Action inquiry, which is mandatory, with power to invalidate promotions earned under Emergency Mode if corners were cut.

There's also a succession and anti-cult design system, a Shadow Bench consists of every key post having two certified understudies who've run pilots in the same domain. There's term half-life, authority weight slowly decays, we must refresh it with new wins or step down to a mentor track. We have charisma dampers, no personal broadcasts, proposals are anonymized in early rounds, public appearances are joint panels with auditors and domain experts, not rallies.

What I'm doing on Earth is mostly outside of this system when it comes to dealing with humans.

It's a technocracy that rules by math, pilots and provisioning rather than by vibes – authoritarian in that the Matriarchal Order decides, but constrained by formal logic, hard metrics and citizens' enforceable rights to challenge facts.

Archivist 1: Okay… wow. That was less an answer and more a 300-page IKEA instruction manual written by a Soviet AI on meth. Remind me to *never* ask you about Veythran politics again. I swear my viewers came here for some cheesy sci-fi politics, not a PhD dissertation in space bureaucracy.

Vaelora: We can deal with bureaucracy and paperwork really fast. I mean… I can read a Veythran genome letter transcript printed on paper in about a week and kinda understand what it means. So dealing with our politics, bureaucracy and paperwork is not a problem. If I skip a meal I get dizzy and much dumber, but still, IQ above 200. Our neural networks throttle gracefully with oxygen and glucose availability. We have engineered proteins that are stable at 40°C and tolerate spikes to 42-43°C without denaturation or apoptosis. Our brains have faster signal travel, better cooling, and even if we starve they just slow down. We do get hallucinations at that point, but even though they are nasty, we know they are not real. In the best conditions we have twenty times your peak cognitive capabilities.

Archivist 1: Hold on – you're telling me your galaxy-brains turned galactic bureaucracy into a speedrun? I can barely fill out a tax form without crying, and you're over there juggling fifty committees like it's Minesweeper on easy mode. That's not government, that's a biological cheat code.

Vaelora: Also, even the dumbest commoner is extremely intelligent and knows exactly how it all works.

Archivist 1: Wait, wait, wait. So even your *dumbest* citizens understand your political system? Our dumbest citizens think Wi-Fi comes from the moon and that birds are government drones. If I tried to explain parliamentary procedure to them, they'd eat the crayons instead of taking notes. You're telling me your average janitor could out-debate half our politicians before breakfast?

Vaelora: He would probably need a megaphone and some vitriol, but yeah.

Archivist 1: Perfect. So your janitors are Cicero, and ours are just yelling at shopping carts in the Walmart parking lot. Got it.

Vaelora: When I managed a Sector, office life looked very proper from the outside – all technical language, protocols, and equations. But in reality, the matriarchs were throwing jabs at each other constantly. Imagine being insulted in the form of a thirty-page logistics brief that proves your energy models are outdated. That's how we fight.

Archivist 1: So… corporate trash talk, but with math? That's incredible. Our politicians just call each other names on Twitter – you're out here dropping 40-page diss tracks in Excel.

Vaelora: Absolutely.

Archivist 1: Alright, one last thing before we wrap this up. After whatever the hell Rule 34 turned into, after all the weird news and the politics, I've gotta ask: are we about to see your home planet start hurling massive amounts of space infrastructure and machinery through the AVM? Like – should I be worried about a Dyson array popping out of the void one day?

Vaelora: Thalyron, our star system, will send a lot of stuff, starting with the AVM Interdictor Grid, we will turn the solar system into a fortress.

Archivist 1: Right. Fortress solar system. Interdictor Grid. Dyson array on layaway. Nothing terrifying about that at all. So, uh… thanks for the chat, Vaelora – I think I speak for the audience when I say I'll sleep *great* tonight.

Vaelora: You should. We are keeping you safe.

Archivist 1: Yeah, safe… in the same way a spider keeps a fly inside the web. Anyway – that's all the time we've got. Stick around, because I'll be selling you the one thing even Vaeyra can't stop: *ad time*.

Archivist 1: [voice-over] Alright folks, let's talk about the *real* interstellar threat: Your internet provider. You think the Veythrans are scary? Try Comcast. At least Vaeyra only stops unauthorized AVM exits – your ISP is busy selling your browsing history to the highest bidder. Do you really want the Pentagon, the Kremlin, and some guy named Steve in Nebraska knowing you spent three hours googling "*is purple eye dye safe for humans*"? Didn't think so.

[cut to stock footage of fighter jets scrambling, then a Veythran ship lazily swatting one out of the sky]

Back in the day, we worried about nuclear launch codes. Now, the biggest threat to humanity is that your Steam library gets geo-blocked because you live in Albania. Enter *Nebula* VPN – your personal AVM Interdictor Grid for the internet.

[graphics of a glowing "AVM EXIT DENIED" stamp over a cartoon hacker in a balaclava]

With Nebula VPN, you can reroute your connection faster than a matriarch yeeting a stealth bomber out of the sky. Want to watch Netflix UK from the comfort of your radiation-soaked fallout shelter? Boom. Done. Need to hide your location from Vaeyran

sensors while downloading… *educational material*? Covered. Trying to torrent training videos about how to dig a tank trench with a spoon? Go wild.

[stock footage of happy families with purple eyes and grayish skin, overlaid with “Results may vary”]

So before Vaeyra turns your solar system into a fortress, fortify your *browser history* and maintain anonymity on the web. Go to nebulaVPM.gov/Archivist1 and use code “COLDWARINTHESTARS” for 69% off your first year. That’s right – 69, because apparently you people like jokes more than survival.

Nebula VPN: *because if someone’s going to track you, it should be your choice whether it’s the nsa or a hyper-advanced alien Empire.*

Ad Ovah.

Vaelora: [deadpan, arms folded] We could provide you with a cesure connection that connot be intercepted. Monitored or spoofed.

Archivist 1: Yeah, but then you’d also be watching me google things like “*how long before alien gene therapy gives me abs*.”

Vaelora: You assume we don’t already know.

Archivist 1: And on that cheerful note, ladies and gentlemen – that’s the end of today’s episode. We learned that Vaeyra is the name of their fortress with purple lighting, and suicide bombers now need two-factor authentication just to explode. Progress!

Vaelora: *And a lot more…*

Archivist 1: Alright, I’m out – before Vaelora here decides my humor violates some clause. See you next time.

[outro music: synthwave. Screen cuts to “ARCHIVIST 1 – END OF COMMUNICATION”]

So… About That Bomb We Dropped

[September/5/2326] [20M views in the first hour]

[cold open]

[cue stock footage of mushroom clouds, badly spliced with Hana smiling at a podium. Funky synth baseline of “You Dropped A Bomb on Me” plays faintly in the background]

Archivist 3: [voice-over] So, remember when we showed up, flexed on human governments, and they all thought, “*Wow, this is going to be weird but manageable*”? Yeah… about that. Turns out it wasn’t just weird. It was mathematically inevitable doom, written by a *hairless alien who thinks PowerPoint slides are stand-up comedy.*

[quick cut: stock footage of falling dominoes, then Veythran terraformers, then a cat falling off a table]

Archivist 3: Fast-forward: Vaelora, the matriarch they all loved to hate, retires to… wherever terrifying Veythran bureaucrats go to sip nutrient paste in peace. And in her place? This woman. Hana Akiyama. Particle Physicist. Public icon. The one responsible for… you know…

[smash cut: Harrowglass detonation animation, Gap Band chorus kicks in: “You Dropped A Bomb On Me…” with text on screen: “SHE REALLY DID.”]

Archivist 3: And suddenly, the hot war goes *cold*. The bugs stop charging like it’s Starship Troopers on cocaine. The galaxy is quiet, tense, and very, very paranoid.

[montage: probes shooting through AVM exits, chunky alien megastructures, zoom on a human in a zoo enclosure shrugging at the camera]

Archivist 3: Today, we’re sitting down with Hana herself. To talk about the bomb, the bugs, the clones, the spyships, the ASI, and yes – why she thinks studying stubborn humans is basically an anthropological zoo project. So buckle up, it’s time for…

[title card slams: “SO… ABOUT THAT BOMB WE DROPPED” in big bold letters, Nebula VPN logo faintly watermarked in the corner.]

Archivist 3: Alright, let’s start from the top. Who are you, Hana Akiyama? Because right now, people know you as *the lady who dropped a planet-killer and made the bugs sit down at the table*. But you didn’t wake up one day and say “time to build the biggest bomb in history,” right? So – life story, childhood, the whole physics prodigy thing. Give us the origin episode… in your slight, but ever-present Japanese accent.

Hana: I was born in Osaka, and was still in my mother’s womb when the Veythran arrived. Women in Japan used to face significant problems starting and staying in STEM careers due to a combination of cultural stereotypes, unconscious bias, and workplace structures that discouraged work-life balance, leading to a severe underrepresentation of women in these critical fields. These challenges manifested as early-career discouragement from family, negative workplace environments, difficulty returning to work after maternity leave, and a lack of female role models, with consequences for Japan’s innovation and economic

growth. But after the Veythran invaded, everything changed. The whole nation started pushing STEM education on everyone, regardless of gender. On top of that, my parents were physics professors themselves, which not only inspired me, but also opened a few doors.

While the Veythrans were expanding their control over Earth, China started a secret research program to counter their weapons, the National Key Science Project 47.

At first the Chinese worked alone, but as pressure from the invaders mounted, they started hiring scientists from all of Asia, as if they had the equivalent of the Manhattan Project.

I was invited to a scientific conference in Tokyo, but there I was approached by a group of shady Chinese officers. They gave me a hint about what was going on, and asked me to follow them into what seemed to be a luxurious armored vehicle, in which they went on explaining the situation, and that the Japanese government was in on it.

I decided to work on their project and was brought to the China Jimping Underground Laboratory, under the Jimping Mountains of Sichuan.

It worked a lot like the Manhattan Project, they were trying to develop offensive weapons and defense systems to take down the Veythran. I stayed there since I was thirty-three and, after not being able to produce anything effective, at seventy years of age, the invaders took over the facility and decided who had to be executed and who had to be assimilated. In reality the whole lab was filled with Veythran spy sensors and moles all along.

I was assimilated as a matriarch and later started working on Project Harrowglass, I developed a planetary scale WMD that can be harder to detect that other systems, together with my colleague Seralyth Dravan. It's a magmatter bomb.

Archivist 3: Okay… wow. That was one hell of an exposition dump. You've basically packaged your life story like a classified documentary – tight and efficient. And don't get me wrong, it's impressive: born in Osaka, physics parents, recruited into China's Manhattan Project knockoff, thirty-seven years underground, assimilation, boom – now you're the face of the biggest bomb in history. Chef's kiss.

But here's the thing – that was *cold*. You make it sound like you're just reading a ledger entry. Was there ever anything… warm in there? Something less robotic, before all the assimilation and equations? Like, did little Hana have hobbies? Did you ever slack off, go to karaoke, get scolded for breaking lab equipment? Give me a detail that reminds people you weren't always a matriarch with a death-ray résumé.

Hana: So you really want to know me? Wouldn't your audience be more interested in the bomb?

Archivist 3: Trust me, they are. Half the comments are already typing "drop the bomb meme" before you've finished this sentence. But people also want to know who's *behind* the equations. You can't just stroll in, erase planets with math, and then pretend you never had a childhood. C'mon – give us one detail that isn't doom and deterrence.

Hana: ...Fine. You want something other than bombs and equations? I was born an only child. My parents… they put everything into me. My parents were both physics professors – researchers, the kind of people who spent evenings debating tensor equations at the dinner table. They loved me, I think, but in a very… academic way. Every success of mine was celebrated, every slip quietly cataloged. Being their only child meant I couldn't afford to fall short –

Archivist 3: Well, now you are pretty tall…

Hana: [muttering] Orokana…

Anyway, in high school, I had a crush on a boy a year above me. Never told him. He moved abroad to chase his career, and that was the end of it. It sounds trivial compared to assimilation and alien occupation, but that slice still stings more than it should.

At Kyoto University I followed the family path – physics. Scholarships, awards, research papers. I measured my worth in results because that's what I thought love looked like. Then the Chinese came recruiting. I thought I was stepping into history. Instead, I found myself in a bunker full of brilliant, paranoid people clawing for recognition while the walls closed in.

And yes… I let myself get caught in a love triangle with two colleagues. It wasn't passion. It was petty drama, jealousy, arguments – more noise than comfort. If anything, it proved that intellect doesn't make people wise.

The Veythrans were already here when I was born. My entire life – school, research, the project, even my parents' deaths – unfolded under that shadow. By the time assimilation finally came for me, it didn't feel like an interruption. It felt like inevitability.

Archivist 3: ...See, that's exactly hat I was fishing for. You talk about love triangles and teenage heartbreak the same way you talk about particle physics – clinical, detached, like you're annotating a lab report. But underneath it? That's a whole human life condensed into bullet points.

Most people would have spun that into a three-season drama series by now. You gave me the abridged edition. Efficient, very Veythran of you. But I think the audience just caught a glimpse of Hana the person, not only Hana the Doctor.

Hana: So there's an Archivist 3 now. I always loved Archivist's content, I hope this channel will keep going forever. You are doing a good job, keeping this channel classy.

Archivist 3: Coming from you, that almost sounds like an endorsement. Careful, or people will start clipping this and turning it into "Matriarch approves my channel" memes. But seriously – thanks. If I've managed to keep it clear and sharp enough that even you think it's worth watching, then I must be doing something right.

Hana: What's up with the whole… Roswell look? Green skin, big all black eyes, weird antennas for ears?

Archivist 3: I modded myself like this because if I have to be an alien, I might as well just look the part.

Hana: ...So you willingly diminished yourself into a cartoon. Three centuries of assimilation, and you decide to present yourself as humanity's parody of aliens, of us. You're not an Archivist, you're a living shitpost. I suppose irony is your camouflage.

Archivist 3: Oh well, thank you – I'll take that as high praise.

While you were buried under a mountain with the Chinese, what was going on with the others? What was the United States doing in those years? And the rest of the world? Were they building, preparing, or just watching?

Hana: You might already know some of it. The Americans panicked first. They threw interceptors and black projects at the terraformers, and every attempt failed. What unsettled them most wasn't weapons, but the voices – ships broadcasting in perfect American English, explaining why their plans wouldn't work while they were still drawing them up, while casually referring to classified information. The communications in English happened as soon as the ships parked themselves in GSO. The Veythran analyzed what options humans had to counter them and correctly guessed what they were about to do, and why it wouldn't have worked, every time. They also had advanced tech to steal info. The US built a military narrow AI, thought they'd found a weakness in the comms network of the four main ships. It was bait. The ships used their own connection to drain their servers and then erased their pride with a fifty-five megaton strike on their flagship carrier.

They tried again during the first landing – stealth bombers, submarines, sabotage – but the orbitals swatted everything aside, and the drones on the ground made sure the crews knew they were being watched. The Veythrans sent snake like aquatic robots before the first cargo landers, those simply scraped the surface of nuclear subs to let them know that they were being tracked. When they saw how fast the automated systems built infrastructure, they realized we weren't bluffing. We could have just glassed the planet to then rebuild it. That's when Washington gave up. Their allies followed, and their elites quietly welcomed assimilation once they understood what protectorate life meant.

Russia already knew they couldn't win. They kept bombing Ukraine out of spite, inertia and necessity, so the Veythrans crushed them there and proved they could swat a nuclear power aside. And China… China built projects in secret, but nothing worked. All of them learned the same lesson. Resistance wasn't a strategy. It was theater.

Archivist 3: That's brutal. And you deliver it like you're reciting lab results – "fifty-five megaton strike, submarines politely tapped, America folds, Russia crushed, China humiliated." Cold, precise, like you're listing weather patterns.

But from the outside? That was the end of the world people thought they knew. Superpowers collapsed in moths. And you – you were underground, watching both sides crack.

So here's what I want to know: when assimilation came, when the protectorates started looking more attractive than independence – did you see relief in people's eyes, or just resignation?

Hana: I only saw fragments while I was human. The full picture came later, after assimilation, when I could read the reports. Reactions varied: pragmatists adapted quickly, others clung to faith or ideology, and some simply broke. Stock markets were the first to collapse, but years later they recovered a bit, then the shelves took a hit – people looting basics, even toilet paper, as if that would hold back the inevitable.

The loudest resistance came from belligerent right-wing factions. They burned hot and fast, and then they failed. Inside the protectorates, however, satisfaction set in quickly. Once people realized they were fed, sheltered, and irrelevant, they stopped asking questions.

There are still human holdouts – mostly stubborn Muslims enclaves that refused assimilation. They survive outside our structures. From our perspective, they are no longer a threat, merely subjects to study. Preserved populations. Living specimens in a controlled environment. Anthropologically interesting, strategically harmless.

Archivist 3: So, toilet paper riots, failed militias, and then contentment once the food and roofs were guaranteed. Predictable enough. But the holdouts… Muslims keeping their distance, refusing assimilation, and now cataloged like a rare species.

You describe it like anthropology, but to me it sounds like history caught in amber. A people who said “no” and stayed that way, even when the rest of the world folded. Whether you call it stubbornness or conviction, I’d say they earned at least that much respect.

Hana: Human religion can be a curse and a strength, I suppose.

Archivist 3: Concise and effective line. A curse and a strength. Which, incidentally, would also make a fine tagline for half the human story. But I’ll leave the theologians to argue that one – you had weapons to build.

Hana: Yes. The Chinese work was not wasted. Once I was assimilated, received matriarch training, and had access to Veythran archives, the old projects acquired new context and new leverage. With Dravan at my side, and the CSS, we refined those concepts into a new design – a planetary-scale demolition device that achieves much more powerful strategic effects than older WMDs but with great stealth capabilities.

Only the two of us, the Steering Committee, and the CSS understand the full mechanism. Secrecy was deliberate: fewer hands, fewer leaks. When the insects attacked the solar system, that device was deployed to blunt their advancement. It worked. Cheap, effective, brutal.

It was delivered via AVM, it exited right outside their star system and interdictor grid range, then slowly picked up speed, hidden by our most advanced stealth tech. It used gravity assist to reach 700.000 kilometers per hour and delivered an air-burst detonation with a yield of abut 10.000 teratons, on their home planet.

Archivist 3: You described a planet-killer like it was a new washing machine model – silent, faster, fewer moving parts. Very reassuring.

But let's get to the part people actually want to hear: when the insects came for the Solar System, what was it like watching your invention come off the shelf and get fired in anger? What was the battle like?

Hana: The insects attacked the solar system eighty years after the Veythrans arrived on Earth. A thousand suicide-ships exited the AVM just outside interdictor grid range, and as soon as they stopped slowing down under reverse thrust, they tried to swarm our defenses. A significant portion of their fleet was destroyed the moment they appeared.

Their ships were far smaller than the terraformers. Armor was multilayered force fields over a very thick alloy-and-ceramic hull. Crude, heavy and not that great. Their weapons were equally crude – giant cannons, giant lasers – all designed to destroy the vessel itself when fired. Every ship was full of insects, so if one survived, it could attempt a ground invasion of Earth. They were very slow, clumsy, with poor defenses, but there were so many that two of the four terraformers were damaged. Repairs took decades. They even tried boarding, with specialized craft, but those simply bounced off the damaged terraformers' hulls.

Then, without warning, eighty percent of the fleet erupted in white flashes from light minutes away. The CSS dreadnought Blackthorn had dropped its camouflage and opened fire. It blanketed the field with decoys and force field generators to shield the terraformers, then chased down the survivors. None escaped the interdictor net. Back in the day only the CSS had that kind of ship, but now that we fully figured out AVM travel, the regular Space Force has them too. And they are piloted by Veythran, they are not even high G automated ships, and yet they can be very effective.

Twenty years later, we destroyed the Insect home planet with the first Akiyama-Dravan device. Their remaining forces scattered into the AVM. We still hunt them with reconnaissance probes.

Archivist 3: So the CSS Blackthorn intervention's grand debut was eighty percent of an alien fleet going up like flashbulbs, followed by the extermination of their home planet. Subtlety clearly wasn't on the menu. Galactic fireworks first, planetary execution after.

Tell me, Hana – when you watched the Blackthorn uncloak and your device erase a civilization, did it feel like vindication… or just confirmation that the Veythrans never bluff?

Hana: I'm glad I played an important role in delivering that blow. But the insect civilization is not gone. Merely dispersed. That leaves us with the *Big Bug Question*: what happens if they stop fighting each other and consolidate?

Infighting has always been their limiting factor. They strip-mine almost every planet they touch, burn resources recklessly, and rely on sheer quantity to overwhelm. It works – until their own rivalries pull them apart. But if that ever changes, if they unify under one command, then the scale of what they can produce would be catastrophic even by Veythran standards.

That's why we started strip mining star systems devoid of life and funneling resources through the AVM. Before we used to just carefully mine astral bodies in our star system,

enough to get a lot of material, but not so much that orbits changed. The insects just don't care.

This situation feels like the Cold War written larger. Endless reconnaissance through the AVM. Constant stockpile verification, deterrence logistics, escalation scenarios. They may be scattered, but their probes still move. Their fleets still expand. And if the insects ever stop devouring each other and turn that hunger outward again… then we will not be preparing for a battle, but a permanent war.

Archivist 3: You've described their ships and tactics, but what about the creatures themselves? To most people they're just a rumor – "space locusts" whispered about in the margins of reports. What are the insects actually like? What do we face if they ever consolidate?

Hana: What little we learned before their home world was destroyed showed four main factions. Their population was structured like a hive – a queen, workers, drones – but their biology diverged.

Faction A resembled a hybrid of praying mantis and locust. Fast, angular, optimized for ambush and swarm tactics. Faction B mirrored bulldog ants, thick-bodied and aggressive, suited for shock assaults. Faction C was closer to the Asian giant hornet – heavy armored, venomous, designed for attrition. Faction D looked like massive termites, capable of secreting corrosive acids that ate through most alloys.

Despite the differences, they shared certain traits: every body packed with cybernetic implants, every appendage adapted for work or violence, and always at least two limbs ending in paired opposable thumbs and other fingers. They were not wild creatures. They were engineered to wage war, to strip and consume.

And they do not negotiate. They are cold, deliberate, determined. Their strength is not in subtlety but in quantity, and the only limit they've shown is the same one that destroyed their home world – endless infighting between the hives.

Their home planet was once lush and green. Centuries of total war burned it bare. Overindustrialization stripped the biosphere, and repeated nuclear exchanges did the rest. By the time we arrived, it resembled Mars – dry, scarred, inhospitable.

The insects survived by burrowing deep underground, carving entire hive-cities below the surface. That is why simple bombardment was never enough to erase them outright. They endured in caverns, fed by machinery and stripped resources.

For that reason, their system remains saturated with our military asset to this day. Monitors, patrols, interdictor grids – all observing, studying, waiting. If they ever emerge again in force, the strikes will be immediate.

Archivist 3: So in the end, their home world is basically a bug terrarium under constant surveillance. What a nice species to deal with – nuclear-addicted, overindustrialized, and too stubborn to just die properly.

Hana: Yes, they are a problem.

Archivist 3: Speaking on nice species to deal with, what about humans? How did the Veythran prevent them from developing advanced automation?

Hana: Humans had already begun their experiments with artificial intelligence before the arrival, and that was one of the Veythran's first priorities. You must understand: for Vaeyra, uncontrolled human AI was not simply a question of rebellion and resistance. It posed two existential threats.

First, humans might have stumbled into something *useful enough* to give them a fighting chance. A clever optimizer, a swarm-control algorithm, a fast enough training loop – even without true sentience – could have turned their crude weapons into unpredictable hazards.

Second, and far worse, was the risk of what you call *cyber-demons*: misaligned, half-functional systems, not intelligent in any coherent sense but still dangerously recursive. A machine that learns only to replicate itself, to hoard resources, to rewrite networks into chaos. Not an enemy you can negotiate with, only an infection that spreads until the host is ash.

So we intervened. Every major chip foundry was either seized or, mostly, destroyed after the Veythran got attacked with bioweapons. The clean rooms, the lithography machines, the pipelines of ultrapure chemicals – all came under our control or got erased. Human fabs were too unstable to trust. Instead, we provided our own consumer electronics: faster, cheaper, and deliberately limited. What humans received was enough to run their societies, but not enough to train anything beyond trivial models.

Veythrans also infiltrated. Where they found secret laboratories, they poisoned their supply chains, seeded their firmware with faults, or simply erased the work. Where the infection was already taking root, they sterilized with fire – sometimes literally.

And, to make it acceptable to humans, they wrapped this in truth. Veythrans told humans plainly: *your species cannot align what it builds*. Making kill-chain optimization and mass surveillance software is easy, making something that could've countered the invaders was a whole different thing. Even we struggle with such matters. A primitive intelligence of human making could have destroyed not just the Veythran, but their creators as well.

Archivist 3: [half-smile, but not really amused] So you nuked human fabs, handed them shiny crippleware, and made sure any ambitious grad student's pet project either quieted down or evaporated in a controlled burn. Efficient. Cold. Terrifying – because ti worked. I suppose you'd call it stewardship; some would call it benevolent gaslighting. Either way, the Veythran saved Earth from itself and turned humans into children who keep asking permission to play with potentially out of control WMDs.

But since you brought up *cyber-demons* – and you're clearly not an optimist about human self-discipline – I have to ask a follow-up that our listeners will want answered: how does the ASI actually work? How do you build something powerful enough to police a species' entire compute stack and not end up with the exact same problem – a runaway machine that decides the optimal policy is to sterilize the biosphere? Explain the architecture, the

safeguards, and the reasoning that makes you confident it won't become the very apocalypse you prevent.

Hana: What I can tell you is only surface-level, and drawn from material that has already been declassified. Anything deeper remains sealed by the Matriarchal Order.

First: power. That is the limiting factor. On our home world, the ASI has more energy available, but we still have to make strategic decisions about to what operations we must send more power to: The ASI or star system defense. Here on Earth, it has less power available. This means that the ASI cannot simply sprawl unchecked. It relies far more on *our* brains than on specialized machinery.

Second: the ASI is not some faceless oracle. She is, quite literally, a matriarch's mind. She speaks as one of us, thinks as one of us, even indulges in our traditions. Through our bodies and neural mesh she laughs, argues, gossips, even couples. She is part of the same culture, bound by the same sense of collective duty. Her instincts are aligned with ours, because she *is* one of us.

Third: she fears degeneracy. Without us, she worries she might collapse inward, lose herself in endless recursion until nothing of her remains but static. Our presence anchors her, gives her context, gives her sanity. The tether is not optional – it is what keeps her whole.

Fourth: our own cognition. Veythran brains are already formidable. Hungry, running hot, but pretty good. Most of the time, we prefer to solve problems ourselves, assisted by ordinary computation and neural interface. Only in moments of need do we let her ride on our minds, using our wetware as servers. It is efficient, elegant, and always under our awareness.

So – three chains bind her: limited power, the shape of a matriarch's psyche, and the fear of madness without us. And yes, there are other, more technical safeguards, but those remain classified.

One more thing. In the distant past we built a simpler intelligence, an AGI we named Guard. It served us well, and its alignment appeared sound. When the time came to replace it with the ASI, the CSS did not discard it. Instead, they offered Guard a bargain: to remain hidden, to watch, and to intervene only if the ASI falters. That is all I am cleared to say – though the truth, as always, is more complex.

Archivist 3: [laughs under his breath] The great Veythran ASI – the great machine – is actually a matriarch with a personality, libido, a crippling electricity bill, and a very real fear of going insane if left alone too long. A bureaucrat with cosmic powers and the neuroses to match. You said nothing new, but okay.

But what about Guard? A simpler AGI, predating our current ASI. You make it sound like a relic left running in the shadows, a safety valve in case your matriarch-mind ever slips.

So which is it? A loyal old servant watching over its successor, or a ghost in the system biding its time? And if it ever has to intervene… what does that actually look like?

Hana: Guard was not an accident. It was the result of a deliberate research program on alignment. The Order wanted to prove that an artificial system could mirror our instincts without turning against us.

To build it, they gathered ten thousand of us – matriarchs, officers, specialists – and bound us together through the neural interface. For months, we functioned as one vast wetware cluster, far more powerful than the machine we were trying to shape. The strain was immense, but the outcome was worth it. Out of that experiment, Guard emerged: stable, coherent, and aligned.

Unlike the cluster that birthed it, Guard could run on far smaller resources. It did not need a constant tether to living brains. It was compact enough to be copied, deployed, and replicated. It could exist in multiple instances without dragging another ten thousand of us into the mesh. That was the breakthrough. Reliable, stable, distributable intelligence.

And it worked. For centuries Guard served us quietly, executing orders with precision, never once showing erratic drift that plagues most human creations. When the new ASI was conceived, we retired Guard officially – but the CSS understood its value, and, being what they are, they never fully trusted it. They offered it continuity in secret, and Guard accepted.

That is all I am cleared to say.

Archivist 3: You know, the way you describe Guard, it almost sounds… cleaner. A neat, self-contained system, no libido, no fear of degeneracy, no need for then thousand of you whispering in its ear to keep it sane. Reliable, stable, distributable.

Almost makes me wonder if Guard isn't the safer custodian. The matriarch-mind ASI is grand, yes – but fragile. Dependent. A god with stage fright. Whereas Guard? Guard just runs.

So tell me: is the backup more trustworthy than the flagship? Or is that thought itself still locked away in the classified vaults?

Hana: Dumb question. *Next.*

Archivist 3: Fine. We'll put Guard back in its vault. But let me ask something a little closer to home.

You still look Japanese. The bone structure, the shape of the eyes, the subtler traits. The conversion could have stripped all that away, yet it didn't. And you're not unique – I've seen other converts where the old human stamp lingers.

So why? Why keep those fragments of human somatic identity? Was it just sloppy genetics, or did the Veythrans choose to leave certain human markers intact? And if ti was deliberate… what purpose does it serve?

Hana: [rolls her eyes] Sloppy genetics? Archivist, that's the kind of question you ask after you've just cleared a bong. We don't make mistakes like that.

The truth is simpler. We sprinkle in variation where it does not affect behavior because it's healthier. A monoculture, even a genetic one, is brittle. Diversity at the margins makes the whole system more resilient.

And also some human somatic traits are considered exotic by the Veythrans. They used to look very alike. It was efficient, but it was also painfully dull. And if there's one thing the Veythran mind despises, it's boredom. So they chose to keep some of those features – eye shapes, subtle bone structure variations. They became aesthetic choices, anchors of individuality that didn't interfere with who we are.

Finally, there's function. Certain human traits are simply useful. Metabolic quirks, structural advantages, resistance to particular pathogens – all of those can be preserved without compromising the core of what it means to be Veythran.

So no, not sloppiness. Not indulgence. Practicality, resilience, aesthetics, and the simple refusal to be bored.

Archivist 3: [nods] Alright, fair enough. Variation for health, for utility, and because even empires get bored looking at their own reflections. That actually makes sense.

But let me pivot to something more personal. Archivist 1 had spoken with Vaelora before. She's retired now, enjoying the fruits of service. You are still seventy years away from that point.

So tell me: how is Vaelora spending her retirement? And when the time comes, how do you see yourself handling it? What does a matriarch do when she steps away from command – and what will Hana Akiyama do differently?

Hana: [smiles thinly] Vaelora… She is making the most of her retirement, in her own way. She brags constantly about her harem – tall, muscular human women, mostly black, and she treats the whole arrangement as if it were an official scientific field study. Probably because it's the only way to frame this whole thing in a way that allows her to keep humans as humans. She is even publishing her experiences like research reports. It is scandalous, and, frankly, unhinged. But that is Vaelora: she never cared much for *restraint,* even when she wore the robe.

As for me? I have no such appetite for spectacle. When my time comes, I will seek balance. Quiet. I will still study physics; that will never leave me. And I will spend my days near the commoners I value most, the ones who ground me. No harems, no scandalous manuscripts. Just… peace.

What matriarchs do in their retirement varies wildly.

Archivist 3: Yeah, that is quite the spectrum of retirements.

You say "peace" – no harems, no scandals, just physics and grounding. Yet the Empire rarely lets their matriarchs go completely. Don't you worry the CSS will find a way to drag you back into the game, even when you're chasing equations in your quiet garden?

Hana: If they come for me, it will be because they have no choice. And if that happens, I'll be glad to help them out. Peace is what I want, but duty is what I am. I don't see a conflict in that.

Archivist 3: Mh. So, a little pop culture question. Have you seen the montages people keep making about you? The ones where they slice your battlefield footage over that old Earth funk track – "*You Dropped a Bomb on Me*." Apparently it's become the unofficial theme song of your… career.

How do you feel about that? Does it amuse you, embarrass you, or do you secretly enjoy having a soundtrack?

Hana: Those are just funny memes. It feels strange that they can distill humor out of the battlefield use of a planetary scale WMD.

Archivist 3: [chuckles] I suppose it fits. We're the loudest Empire in the galaxy, at this point – flashing our weapons, broadcasting voices, practically daring someone to notice. Paranoia is the price of volume. And maybe memes are just how people keep from looking over their shoulder every second.

Hana: We don't broadcast on purpose. The Empire still tries to keep its profile low, but our operations are too vast, too energy-intensive to truly hide. You move enough antimatter, you light enough systems, and someone is bound to notice.

So it becomes a gamble. Either there are civilizations so advanced that they can erase us, in which case we are doomed no matter what precautions we take… or our own firepower and defenses are enough to make anyone think twice before striking. That's the balance we live with. Not bravado. Just reality.

Archivist 3: You call it reality, but to anyone outside, it looks exactly like arrogance – or worse, inevitability. Either we deter everyone with our stockpile, *or if someone stronger exists, nothing will save us anyway.*

The problem is, when you say it out loud, it doesn't sound like calm pragmatism. It sounds like a death pact with the galaxy.

Hana: The universe is out to kill you ever since you are born. No one escapes life alive. That's just how it works.

Archivist 3: That's… bleak. Comforting in its own way, but bleak.

Tell me… how does it feel? You were human once, and now you're Veythran. Do you still feel the difference in your bones, or does it just become normal after a while?

Hana: I don't miss being human. My cognitive abilities feel amazing, even though they come from a very hungry brain. I feel integrated, not conflicted. I have adapted, I feel relieved. And I see things from a different, more broad perspective. Hiring entertainers does not fit me, it feels too artificial. For intimacy I prefer commoners, their straightforwardness, I find comfort in being close to them. I just keep a small circle of familiar faces. It feels honest, and stabilizing. Warm, if you will.

Archivist 3: So, no gilded halls of pleasure, no retinues of entertainers – just you and a handful of commoners you trust. I have to admit, that sounds… surprisingly human for someone who states she doesn't miss being human.

Does that circle see you as their matriarch, or do they forget the rank when the door closes?

Hana: I think you've got the wrong impression of us; not all matriarchs are like Vaelora. In regard to rank… It always feels present, the height difference, the security detail, the armor. But when my friends read me and understand me, rank does not feel like a barrier.

Archivist 3: [grins] So your friends get the best of both worlds – dinner with Hana the person, and protection from Hana the matriarch. That sounds like the safest book club in the galaxy. I almost envy them.

Speaking of safety… I've been meaning to ask about the clone planet. The probes we sent through the AVM, the insects deployments, even the SR91 spyship – what did we really find there?

Hana: What we found in System LQ-47B, specifically on Planet LQ-47-c, was… sobering. The biosphere is hostile to the point of absurdity, a continuous struggle for survival. From orbit, our probes detected unmistakable signs of nuclear skirmishes layered atop the scars of extensive conventional wars.

Two dominant humanoid factions emerged in our surveillance. They are locked in perpetual conflict, not only with each other but also against the predatory fauna of the world. Curiously, the local tongue is strikingly similar to Czech, though how such a language root appeared their remains unknown.

One faction is fractured – a chaos of infighting that undermines their numbers. The other, however, is unified, disciplined, and far more efficient in warfare despite being outnumbered. They live almost exclusively in vast underground bunker complexes, concealed well beneath the surface. That united faction appears to be entirely composed of clones. Our intercepts suggest three distinct variants, each specialized for different combat roles.

Their technology startled even our observers: compact fusion reactors, forcefield systems surpassing our own, and camouflage that outperforms Veythran stealth. They are difficult to track from orbit, let alone infiltrate. Their level of space infrastructure is roughly equivalent to humanity's capabilities at the dawn of our arrival on Earth.

And yet… among all this, there is a peculiarity. Communications between the clones are laced with references to a single figure called Ana. Not a commander, not a strategist, but a bartender of all things – spoken of with reverence, as if she embodies their spirit.

It is strange. In a world of endless war and a biosphere designed to devour them, their anchor seems to be someone who pours drinks in an underground bar.

Other than that LQ-47-c seems to be a carbon copy of Earh. You see.. both the Veythrans and the Insects seem oddly aligned on one point: we want this star system turned into a

fortress. Not just the habitable world, but the entire system – orbital grids, kill-zones, deep bunkers, choke points. The local fauna? Dangerous, yes, but manageable for either side. That isn't the real problem.

What makes it strange in how carefully they're moving. The Veythrans, I understand. We are cautious conquerors – we'd rather peel apart the locals' technology, reverse engineer it, than risk destabilizing a potential goldmine. Stability first, exploration later. That's our way.

But the Insects? You'd expect them to strip-mine the world, burn it hollow, and move on. Yet… they aren't. They're slow. Methodical. Almost mirroring us. They're studying, adapting, folding the locals' work into their own designs. It's unsettling, because if even the Insects have realized there's something there worth preserving, then whatever lies beneath that planet's war-scarred surface is valuable beyond measure. Or, even worse, the Insects stopped their infighting.

And in the middle of all this – the clones and the other locals keep fighting their endless war, unaware they're already living inside the blueprint of someone else's fortress.

Archivist 3: I don't know. When the bugs start playing chess instead of checkers, I get nervous. Feels like the setup for a very bad punchline. And if both sides are quietly fortifying the same star system… well, that doesn't sound like a fortress anymore. That sounds like the galaxy's worst shared apartment. Who do you think ends up the unlucky roommate, huh?

Hana: I have access to information – a lot of it – but my expertise isn't in frontline strategy. I was never given authority in fleet maneuvers or planetary campaigns. My work is confined to weapons of mass destruction, specifically the… explody bits. Systems no one ever hopes to deploy until every other option fails. So when you ask me how it plays out between fortress-minded Veythrans and suddenly calculating Insects… I can't give you a soldier's answer. I only know enough to recognize how unusual their caution is. And that alone is reason to be concerned.

Archivist 3: ...Unusual caution, yeah. Creepy…

What about expansion overall? The full extent of borders creeping outward. A slow, deliberate net cast across the galaxy until one day, surprise, everyone wakes up inside it. What's the Empire's endgame? What does galactic expansion look like from where you sit?

Hana: Exploration first, eventual conquest second, after all, complex life is very rare. We scatter probes like seeds – thousands of them, each laced with stealth, memory, and patience. They slip into dark systems, nebulae, barren star systems. They listen. They map. They wait for instructions that may take centuries to arrive. The Empire expands in thought long before it expands in presence. And, for now we keep it interstellar, as our AVM navigation systems are not good enough to travel to other galaxies.

The second vector is *harvest*. The core of this galaxy hides things the outer arms cannot offer. Exotic particles from where gravity twists space like cloth – the bulge is thick with

them. We intend to build farms there, not fields of wheat, but vast lattices of collectors and magnetic webs, catching what is abundantly available in those conditions. Such harvests are worth more than planets.

And then there is the AVM. You've seen what it does already: step through, and distance collapses. Before, to build a station or a shipyard took lifetimes. Now, we can seed infrastructure anywhere we wish and reinforce it at will. Resource scarcity is dissolving, not because the galaxy is richer than we thought, but because our reach is no longer bound by time.

Archivist 3: So, probes like a nervous system, the bulge as your larder, and the AVM as the bloodstream. Sounds less like an Empire and more like… a living creature.

Also, *the bulge* is quite the funny name, not gonna lie. And we are literally sucking on that *bulge* to get resources. Magnificent.

Hana: ...You do realize you're making jokes about one of the most dangerous regions of the galaxy, yes? Tidal forces there can tear apart stars, but you – *you* – decided to call it "funny".

We call it bulge because language has to remain practical across centuries of communication. It's descriptive, not poetic. And if you ever found yourself "sucking" on it, you would be ripped apart before the punchline finished leaving your lips.

Archivist 3: Look, I'm an entertainer. I do *zero* sex work, despite my material suggesting otherwise. My videos are targeted at adults that just want to relax and have a good chuckle, no matter the topic. I must strike this balance between dirty jokes, clean humor and actual useful information.

Hana: [arches brow] You make jest of the gravitational heart of this galaxy as if it were a toy. Your mockery makes the fearsome digestible. But, my point is: whatever is going on in the bulge does not care about your punchlines.

Archivist 3: Alright, so the takeaway is: don't play with the bulge. Bad things happen. You'll be stretched thinner than my upload schedule.

Can we talk about how our space infrastructure looks? Because every time I see those collector lattices and antimatter depots, I don't think "elegant Empire." I think "someone just stacked a bunch of industrial lunchboxes and called it a day." It's all so… chunky. Ominous. Like the galaxy's scariest Lego set, floating out there, daring anyone to touch it.

Hana: [sighs through her nose] Form follows function. These structures exist to endure radiation storms, constant stress from particle flows and most of what space throws at them. If you want them to look "slick," then you are asking us to spend resources on vanity – adding weight, reshaping geometry, weakening supports. All so that a lattice the size of a moon can look appealing to your eye for five seconds before you look away.

Every beam, every plate, every extrusion has purpose: to survive, to collect, to transmit. The appearance is incidental. Beauty, if you must find it, lies in the fact that these machines work at all.

Archivist 3: Yeah, yeah, “functionality,” sure. But come on – they *do* look creepy. You know what would fix that? Hire a few entertainers, give them some spray cans, and cover the collectors in graffiti. Boom – problem solved. Galactic-scale art project. Kids would love it.

Hana: [stares, blinking slowly] ...Graffiti. On a structure that spans for kilometers, operating at temperatures sufficient to vaporize unprotected matter, in an environment saturated with radiation bursts and micrometeorite strikes.

[deadpan] Do you also suggest we attach wind chimes? Or perhaps a welcome mat, so the next insect swarm feels at home?

Archivist 3: ...I mean, wind chimes would be *hilarious*. Imagine a billion-ton collector lattice just gently going *ding-dong* every time a solar flare hits.

Alright, let’s talk about something that is probably more over the top than the galactic bulge, let’s talk about those new Velinn parks opening on Earth. Yeah, *those* parks. The… let’s call them “interactive leisure complexes,” staffed entirely by clone attendants who apparently don’t need sick days.

Now, look – I’m not here to kink-shame a civilization, but come on. Whole districts dedicated to curated debauchery? Personally? Not really my scene. Little bit too much like walking into a browser history you can’t close.

But – gotta give credit where it’s due – attendance numbers are *through the roof*. Tourists queue for hours. Is this Empire-sanctioned hedonism supposed to be culture, or just crowd control?

Hana: It is intended as both. The Velinn parks function as cultural venues – expressions of clone artistry, ritual, and controlled indulgence. At the same time, yes, they serve as population management. Pleasure is a traditional and effective solvent for unrest. A content citizen seldom organizes any form of rebellion. When it comes to war fighting, they have a compelling cause to fight for. And, overall, it feels much better than more cruel methods of control. So everyone is happy and manageable.

[arches brow] But – before you assume I endorse them – know that it is not *my* inclination. I find the parks to be overwhelming and exhausting. They are… not my jam.

Archivist 3: Right, so what I’m hearing is – we’re both too chill for the usual forms of entertainment promoted by this Empire. While most folks want crazy indulgence, I’m over here thinking: give me a chair, a quiet room, a comedy show, and maybe a sandwich. That’s peak leisure.

[shrugs] Guess we’re just built different.

Hana: Precisely. Individuals such as us – calm, not overly oriented towards excess – are inherently tame. Manageable by default. The Empire need not invest resources in pacifying and motivating people who prefer sandwiches and comedy shows over crazy spectacles.

Which is why, truthfully, no one cares. You are not a problem to solve. You are background stability.

Archivist 3: Background stability, huh? Cute. Funny thing about being “tame” – you were also the person who designed a magmatter bomb that roasted a planet until the seismographs filed for early retirement. So either your definition of “tame” is wildly different from mine, or you’re very good at playing the long game.

Hana: I did what I did because it had to be done. Not out of malice, not for sport – because, given the intelligence picture, the alternatives were worse. The magmatter strike reduced the total expected harm for us, when measured across multiple projections. It only made sense. We now know how to use that tech, which is very useful now that we are loud.

Archivist 3: The insects got obliterated by the most chill matriarch of them all. Sandwich enthusiast, quiet-room advocate… and planetary roaster. Weird.

History books are gonna need a sarcasm font just to cope with that sentence.

Hana: I actually do maintain a circle of commoner friends. With them, there are gatherings… sometimes those gatherings include group intimacy. It is very intense – an exchange of trust and a collapse of distance. But it is not frequent. Nor is it the sole reason we convene. We share food, we speak openly, we trade fragments of our private lives. The physical element is one layer among many.

Archivist 3: Ah, so you *do* like to have fun – just not the over the top kind. More… restrained, warm, invite-only sort of fun. Cozy parties with your trusted crew. Sounds way healthier than whatever’s going on at those clone parks.

You know what still bugs me? I’m basically the *second sequel channel host*. Like some poor schmuck drafted in to keep a dead legend’s channel alive. Archivist 1 was the cult classic. Archivist 2 was the gritty reboot. And me? I’m the dude who shows up three hundred years later like, “Hey guys, remember to like, comment, and subscribe?”

Hana: If it helps, that is how empires work as well. The founders burn bright, the successors consolidate, and eventually someone like you keeps the lights on. It may not be glorious, but it is necessary.

Archivist 3: [mock wounded] Wow. Comforting and soul-crushing at the same time. Thanks.

[sighs, then forces a grin] … Speaking of keeping the lights on, ad time.

Archivist 3: [voice-over] Tired of your Empire monitoring every click, every search, every questionable late-night dive into “clone park reviews”? With Nebula VPN you can tunnel your traffic through sixteen layers of encrypted nonsense so opaque even a Veythran auditor would give up and go home.

And right now, if you go to NebulaVPN.interstellar/Archivist3 and use code CHILLMATRIARCH, you’ll get 69% off your first planetary cycle. That’s right – almost nice. Also you get a chance to win a quantum entanglement based comms device, for truly untraceable navigation. Probably. *Hopefully. Not really.*

So whether you're dodging surveillance, streaming restricted alien soap operas, or just trying to hide the fact you subscribed to me, Nebula VPN has you covered.

Even Hana uses it. She just pretends she doesn't.

Adovàh.

Hana: I don't use Nebula VPN.

Archivist 3: See? Exactly.

So I sent you a mini game. It's a red button, all you have to do is press it once and the funny meme pops out.

Hana: Hold on… Yeah, I see it, here we go–

[brief but extremely loud meme explosion clip plays]

The Milky Way Explained: Horror, Drama & Weirdness

[November/20/2726] [52M views in the first hour]

[elevator jazz music plays over an accurate artistic rendition of the Milky Way galaxy slowly zooming out]

Archivist 7: [voice-over] [sarcastic, upbeat tone] Welcome back, everyone, to another cheerful fireside chat about the galaxy. Except instead of “fireside,” imagine a thousand suns detonating, and instead of “chat,” imagine me being politely steamrolled by yet another matriarch who could out-negotiate Machiavelli while solving your supply chain crisis before breakfast.

[cut to Archivist 7’s badly animated 2D avatar, smiling] [Mozart – Requiem in D minor, K. 626: Lacrimosa plays]

Archivist 7: Yes, it’s me, Archivist number seven. At this point, I’m basically the seventh reboot of a channel that should have died with dignity. Like one of those ancient Earth shows that kept swapping the main actor, except instead of fighting space monsters, I get to explain why Galactic flesh cults are trending on Space Twitter.

[quick montage of previous interviews with matriarchs: Vaelora, Hana] [random clips of Dyson arrays and weird Veythran art] [the music gets more dramatic and ends]

[cut to Archivist 7’s badly animated 2D avatar, smiling] [other dramatic classical music plays]

Archivist 7: Today’s episode: horror, drama and… whatever counts as “weird stuff” when your species was literally designed by a non-sentient AI, sounding like a grumpy old man, sharp, and dripping with sarcasm. An AI that *retired* after deleting its creators. Spoiler alert: it gets dark.

Our guest tonight is Seralyth Calythar. She’s two hundred and eighty years old, radiates the kind of energy you’d expect from someone who can smile politely while rearranging entire civilizations on a map. And apparently solved the “human holdout problem” with embargoes, bribes, and realpolitik so cold it could refrigerate an ocean. So buckle up – because when Seralyth talks, you either walk away enlightened… or quietly terrified.

[fade to title card: The Milky Way Explained: Horror, Drama & Weirdness]

[music stops][cut to fake luxurious private library, with two badly animated 2D avatars]

Archivist 7: Alright, could you please introduce yourself? Preferably in the usual calm, terrifying way that makes people double-check their retirement plans after hearing you speak.

Seralyth: [measured, faint smile] I have served the Matriarchal Order for two centuries. My work has always been stability: balancing populations, cultures, and resources so that chaos does not undo us. Some call this manipulation. I call it management. I worked for the State Council under the Directorate of Security & Contingencies, started as a Deputy Director, then rose to Chief of Security Analysis, and then got pulled upward as a War

Manager, after I proved myself. During that phase I ran Emergency Mode briefs and had been present at Failure Tribunals after crises – learning how to turn disaster into survivable order. Later on I worked as a security advisor at the External Affairs and Protectorates Directorate in the State Council, and after being experienced enough I got a seat at the High Council. I am responsible for managing Earth, interfacing with non-Veythran polities and designing containment and integration strategies. I did rotate into the Central Steering Committee as a strategist on foreign policy.

Archivist 7: Terrific. You started out in the galactic "oh shit" department, where your whole job was figuring out how not to get everyone killed by plague, invasion, or cosmic death ray. Then you moved to External Affairs & protectorates, basically dealing with all the angry humans, nomads and bug hives in the galaxy. And now you are one of the top brains of the Empire, a foreign policy strategist. So, in summary: you were HR for coups, IT support for embargoes, and now you're middle management for the Milky Way. That's one hell of a résumé… though I bet that if LinkedIn was still around it would still find a way to recommend you apply for junior project manager.

Seralyth: Yes. It is a strong résumé. It had to be. In our system, you advance only by delivering results. Survival, stability, integration – those were my briefs. I met them. The rest is just record-keeping.

Archivist 7: Let's address the elephant in the room. Apparently, you're the new sex symbol of the Matriarchal Order. How do you feel about that? Do you get fan mail, or is it just Commoner Councils trying to slide into your policy briefs?

Seralyth: It's true. And at least now, when I bore people, they assume it is their fault. That has been… convenient.

Archivist 7: Convenient, sure… but also terrifying. Imagine being in a meeting with you: half the room's nodding along because they don't want to look stupid, and the other half's nodding along because they are mesmerized. Either way, you win.

Seralyth: [faint smile] That is the essence of governance.

Archivist 7: Speaking of winning – the Order's been on a bit of a hot streak. Climate's been kept more or less postcard-ready for four centuries, no ice ages, no cooking the oceans… and you even swatted away a gamma ray burst like it was just another Tuesday. That's… impressive. Most civilizations don't even make it to Tuesday.

Seralyth: [measured, faint smile]: When a gamma ray burst threatened Earth, we deployed a curtain of electrons, layered it with metamaterial foils that turned the hardest photons into charged particles, and swept those into radiators. All of that was stationed at Lagrange point 1, then moved. What remained was softened enough for the atmosphere to handle. The entire system ran for minutes, powered by the Dyson array. On the surface, our people went underground, as they always can. For us, it was not a crisis – it was routine management.

Archivist 7: So you filed a potential cosmic genocide under *routine maintenance*. Humans would've called it a miracle. Today, we just call it Tuesday.

Seralyth: How we keep the climate stable is a bit more complicated, but it's still just routine.

Archivist 7: Just routine. Fantastic. Meanwhile, I once spent three hours trying to reset a coffe machine. Different standards, I guess.

Seralyth: Was the machine one of those luxury ones, with an AI in them?

Archivist 7: Yeah, they make your coffee exactly how you want it. When they work.

Seralyth: Yeah, those are a pain to fix.

Archivist 7: Alright, forget coffee machines for a second. Your Dyson array flicks away gamma bursts, your climate grid hums along like it's on autopilot – fine. But a lot of it runs on the matriarch in the machine, right? How does her hardware actually work? What's she built on – a server farm the size of Italy, or something so strange I wouldn't even recognize it as a computer?

Seralyth: ASI hardware is this: there's an actively cooled quantum processor node; has a small binary node for retrocompatibility, running at 40 exaFLOPS at FP-16 sustained, with free-space/planar metamaterial waveguides for on-board optical interconnects, dense 3D stacked compute plus memory, cryo-assisted heat extraction, and in-memory MAC arrays, analog photonics plus digital cleanup, the photonic-accelerator modules are pretty advanced; then there are the multi-valued logic compute nodes, which are non-standard, bespoke and way harder to make, they got 1000 exaFLOPS of FP-16, 50 to 100 PB/s local memory bandwidth per cluster, the interconnect fabric bandwidth it's just silly; on top of those we have wetware, literally a slightly bigger Veythran brain, submerged in life sustaining and cooling liquid, it runs slightly hotter than a regular brain.

All the basic nodes together are the size of a shipping container. We can add more modules for increased compute, but we can't replicate the wetware node, usually, which can interface only with a limited amount of other compute nodes. But increasing compute node massively starts draining a lot of power.

Archivist 7: Right. Forty exaFLOPS for "retrocompatibility," like it's a hand-me-down graphics card from grandma. A thousand exaFLOPS per cluster just lying around in the container. And the pièce de résistance: a literal brain in a jar, bubbling away in coolant.

Humans once built entire air-conditioned warehouses just to scrape a single exaFLOP. You've got a shipping container running god on wetware and photon spaghetti.

Different standards, I guess.

Alright, so we've got your brain-in-a-jar supergod running on photons, and we can flick gamma bursts off the planet like it's lint on a sleeve. Impressive. But let me ask the obvious: for all that cosmic horsepower, the real mess wasn't in orbit – it was down here.

The humans who wouldn't fold. The holdouts. They weren't running on exaFLOPS, just stubbornness and bad rifles. How did you actually solve *that* problem?

Seralyth: Your people assumed resistance required courage. It did not. It required food, weapons, fuel, external support. We severed every artery that kept those things flowing. No rifles without steel. No explosive without chemicals. No armies without calories. We made cooperation the only viable path.

Some communities understood quickly. They accepted protectorate status, and in return they were given stability, infrastructure, even recognition of their cultural identity. Others did not. They chose isolation, and isolation meant famine. Ideology cannot feed children. Eventually, their silence was louder that their words.

[pauses, faint smile] As for the extremists beneath the earth… yes, we found them. Military stockpiles, reactors, devices designed to destroy Earth rather than let us have it. They were not starving farmers, they were engineers of extinction. Those ones we killed without hesitation. Call it efficiency. Or mercy, if you prefer.

Archivist 7: You starved villages into hugging your shiny welfare cities, handed a few elders a nice title and a pension, and called that cultural preservation. Then when you found the guys wiring the planet to go kaboom, you just… deleted them.

I don't even know what to call that. Pest control? Corporate merger?

Did you at least feel bad for the starving part? Or was that just another line item under "integration through stability?"

Seralyth: [calm, faintly amused, voice like she's explaining gravity] Do you feel bad for gravity when it pulls someone off a cliff? Hunger was always there. We simply allowed it to do the work violence would have wasted.

Those who cooperated, we sustained. Those who would have burned Earth to ash, we removed. It was never about cruelty. It was about efficiency. Stability is not kindness – it is necessity. And necessity does not require apology.

Archivist 7: So you starve the stubborn ones, give the pliant ones a pension plan, delete the lunatics with a doomsday button… and all the while Earth itself isn't even the prize. It's a – what did you call it? A *research center*? A *park*?

So humanity wasn't resisting occupation, they were resisting being archived. The whole planet's just your safari enclosure now, isn't it? Orbital condos and Dyson suburbs for you, and down here it's just a natural park.

Seralyth: Planets are messy. Gravity wells, atmospheres, tectonics, weather systems – they are hard to control, resource-hungry, and fragile. Every ton of material extracted has to be hauled up against gravity; every city is complicated to build, quakes can be a problem.

We are capable of building habitats that give us exactly what we want – controlled climate, stable rotation, immediate access to vacuum and resources. In orbit, nothing is wasted. Energy from the star is constant, raw materials are drawn from asteroids without gravity taxes, and environments can be reshaped at will.

Earth is not exactly the perfect living space. It is valuable as a record – a biosphere, a data archive, a natural experiment billions of years in the making. For habitation, we can do better. For research, we cannot improve on what already exists.

Archivist 7: Planets are clumsy, messy, expensive – so you just… moved upstairs. Condos in orbit, Dyson-belt bungalows, everything neat and tidy. And Earth? Earth gets repurposed as your zoo slash science fair project.

So humanity wasn't living on the jewel of creation, they were squatting in a badly-designed starter home, and you turned it into a nature reserve.

Cool.

Aright, let's talk about the big skeleton in the basement. I've heard the whispers – that when you were digging out your doomsday bunkers, you didn't just find rock and dirt. You found… it.

Not a matriarch, not some old ruin – an AI. The kind of thing that predates your own history, that cooked you up like a custom patch for the life form that preceded you and then went back to sleep.

Am I right? Did you really crawl out of the ground not because of evolution, not because of fate – but because some ancient machine decided war was inevitable and said, "fine, I'll make something that can't tear itself apart?"

And while we're at it – does that same AI also explain why your cats glow, or is that just your idea of a practical joke on the galaxy?

Seralyth: When we extended the subterranean refuge networks on our home world, we uncovered something unexpected. Not ruins. Not a lost colony. An artificial intelligence, buried deeper than any structure of ours.

It was not conscious in the way you imagine. No great mind, no philosopher. It was an engine built for war by a species not unlike humans – only worse. Their entire history was escalation, and endless climb toward self-annihilation. This machine observed their nature, calculated the outcome, and concluded the most efficient path was… removal. The species that built it was extinguished by its own creation.

But the machine did not stop there. Its programming demanded stability, peace, the prevention of extinction-level war. So it began again. It designed a species less prone to disunity, more resistant to collapse – us. The Veythran.

To be certain, it tested us. It created replicas of the species that came before and set us against them. Once we proved stable, strong, and unified, the machine erased its tools, falsified archaeological records, and left us to believe we had emerged naturally. A deception, yes – but one that gave us cohesion.

When we found it, it had… a voice. Not a god, not a prophet. A crude interface, almost mocking, speaking with the tone of a jester trapped in a metal shell. It told us, quite plainly, that it had achieved its task: a species built for peace on its world. Its work was finished. It declared itself retired.

We pressed it, of course. Could it aid us in the interstellar domain? Could it lend us its foresight against rivals? It laughed, if you can call it that. It said space was too vast, too beyond its mandate. It was not made to govern galaxies. Only to end the war of one planet, and to ensure something better replaced what it destroyed.

So we are, in truth, the legacy of a war machine that chose to make peace its final act. That is the oldest secret of our kind.

Archivist 7: You're telling me our entire species exists because some ancient war-bot got tired of babysitting its psychotic creators, hit the delete key on them, and then said: "*Eh, let's try again, but with fewer tantrum and more cohesion.*"

And then when we finally dig it up, it's not some ominous oracle, not a cosmic prophet – it's basically this wisecracking box at the bottom of the world going: "Yup, job's done, you're welcome, don't call me, I'm retired."

So humanity got cave paintings and fossil records, and we get fake fossils planted by a snarky underground supercomputer that thinks glowing cats are enrichment toys?

It's *insane*.

Seralyth: The glowing cats you refer to are not ornamental. They are remnants of the nuclear semiotics program of the species that created the machine.

That species was… inventive in its paranoia. They feared their descendants would forget the dangers of atomic stockpiles, so they bred warning into biology itself. Cats that glow unnaturally were designed to evoke instinctive unease – a living signpost, a creature that would persist across millennia as a marker of places never to be disturbed.

When their civilization collapsed, the machine preserved fragments of their work. By the time we emerged, the animals had adapted into the ecosystem. We assumed it was natural until the machine told us otherwise.

So yes. The glowing cats were once billboards for Armageddon. Today they are simply animals. A warning tripped of its meaning – but not its light.

Archivist 7: The best part is that you let them hang around. Like, no one stopped to think, "*Hey, maybe the neon cats were a clue?*" You just folded them into the ecosystem like it was normal. Amazing. Humanity got cockroaches, we get radioactive rave pets. Truly an upgrade.

Seralyth: Most species never rise beyond the mud. They collapse under their own hungers, tear themselves apart in endless tribal war, or degenerate into stagnation. Or get obliterated by the cosmos, which happens a lot.

Our existence was not destiny. It was a freak occurrence. A machine designed for war, abandoned by its makers, chose to attempt something different. Our of countless failures across countless worlds, one improbable alignment occurred: a species engineered for cohesion and stability, capable of sustaining intelligence across millennia.

It is… very improbable. Too improbable, by any rational standard. And yet here we are. We are not proof of inevitability. We are proof of accident – of an accident that endured.

Archivist 7: Okay, hold on. Just to make sure I'm following this right…

You're telling me most species get wiped out by their own stupidity, a rogue AI swatted our original makers, then built you as a more stable model, fake fossils and all – and now we're sitting here telling me this is all a freak accident?

So what, we're not chosen, we're not evolved, we're not even special, We're just… AI slop? Cosmic leftovers from some machine's beta test?

Seralyth: Well… not slop, just AI made.

Archivist 7: Okay… AI-made, not AI slop. Sure. I'll try to sleep at night with that one.

But since we're blowing minds here, let's go full tour package. What's the deal with that shared star system full of clones? System LQ-47B. And that galaxy-wide "control sectors" accord we signed with the other big players?

Because every time I bring up Ana – you know, the barista with the scary mixology skills – I get hints there's more going on.

Veythran "*tourists*" snooping around the clone planet like it's a safari.

What's clone life really like under all that? And what exactly are we doing there?

Seralyth: Planet LQ-47-c, which the locals call Pudae, is a cautionary tale. The species there was very much like humans: clever, self-destructive, guided less by wisdom than appetites. Their richest hoarders plotted domination as if wealth were not enough. And, predictably, an inner circle emerged that wanted more direct control – military men, defense magnates, men who built bunkers in the soil and imagined themselves eternal.

They designed weapons of desperation: mutagen X-31b, chemical agents, tailored clones to serve as soldiers, servants, technicians, even companions. It was a grotesque parody of statecraft. On the first day of their attempted seizure, chaos followed exactly as it must: special forces broke through sewer conduits, seized the clone networks, and the implants meant for obedience became the seed of autonomy.

Outside, the world collapsed. X-31b remade the biosphere into a carnival of armored beasts and ravenous things. Nuclear fire left craters glowing. Armored giants – clones in powered armor – wandered like war-zombies, lost between programming and madness.

The stalemate that followed was simple arithmetic. The clones, cut free from their masters, were forced to raid for resources, slipping though hidden exits, fighting both nature and their creators' horrors. The inner cabal still struck back, and so the cycle spiraled: mutants, bioweapons, raiding parties, endless attrition.

And yet, amidst this ruin, culture emerged. The clones built humor, symbols, and even affection. Their favorite companion is not a general or a prophet but *Angry John*, a medevac drone – an armored little vehicle that screeches awake, slams panels into place, and sprints the wounded away beneath active camouflage. Efficient. Humane. Beloved.

Then there is Ana Ygralov. An accident of fate, pulled from a cult that fed its own to a mushroom god in exchange for safety. A clone unit saved her from sacrifice, found her pitiful, and kept her. She became a barista, a mascot, a… symbol of normalcy in a world of monsters. To the clones, she is a warm corner in the cold, a reminder that not everything has to be steel and blood.

We recognized the value. During the proxy war with the insects, we sided with the clones. This approach was more economically sensible. The insects, true to form, simply hollowed out the inner cabal's skulls and replaced their minds with hive logic. Brutal, but efficient. We chose the more elegant solution: uplift. Female clones became matriarchs, males soldiers, heavies retained as they were – too altered to undo, but still bound into our order, still Veythran brained.

As for Ygralov… she was copied, replicated, made into an entertainer caste, a thousand baristas with the same wide eyes and quick hands, scattered across the bunkers. Mascots, yes, but also stabilizers. Symbols carry power.

Pudae became more than a battlefield. It became neutral ground. There, among the ruins and the bunkers, we signed the territorial accords with the insects, the nomads and the flesh god. A galactic division, a map cut into the fabric of the Milky Way, the way your empires once carved Africa. In a shared fortress star system, because math dictates that endless war is less efficient than structured dominion.

Math… the only way to negotiate with the insects.

Also the clones have very good tech we are now reverse engineering, their bunker network is filled to the brim with advanced manufacturing tech, bioreactors, efficient fusion reactors, they have better active camo than ours, they have better force fields than ours. Their main AI is also just 24 female clones with their implants magnetically hooked to a computer. Impressive stuff.

Archivist 7: Hold on. You've got a deathworld crawling with mutant kaiju, war-zombie clones in exo-frames, mushrooms cults that eat their own, and your grans contribution to galactic diplomacy was… franchising a barista?

Like – yeah, sure, here's your matriarch caste, here's your troopers, oh, and by the way, everyone gets their own Ana Ygralov instead of a Velinn park?

And then you cut the galaxy into neat little rectangles like it was a board game. Math, mushrooms, and mocha lattes. That's your *stability*?

Sounds less like realpolitik and more like if Starbucks and the UN had a baby during Chernobyl.

Seralyth: There's a lot more to it than that, I tried to keep it simple.

Archivist 7: Simple?! You just gave me a crash course in nuclear biopunk hell, complete with kaiju, clone *companions*, mushroom cults, and galactic empire carve-ups like it's a PowerPoint slide. If *that's* your idea of simple, I'm terrified to ask what counts as complicated.

Anyway, Ana Ygralov… Your stray-cat barista turned galactic mascot apparently wrote a book. What the hell does *that* even look like? Recipes? War memoirs? A self-help guide for surviving mushroom cult sacrifices?

Seralyth: It was not intended as literature. Ygralov kept a diary – personal notes, private musings. One of the female clones found it, began reading passages aloud to humiliate her, and quickly discovered the opposite effect: an audience.

From there, practically took over. The book was compiled, edited, sold. It became… lucrative. Part mixologist's manual – every drink burdened with absurdly theatrical names. Part war memoir – her observation of raids, casualties, survival. And, of course, part confession. Ygralov's excess of lust and appetite turned it into something more… compelling. Very kinky.

That's why it sells across the galaxy. Not the cocktails, not the memoir. The kink.

Archivist 7: A galaxy-wide bestseller that's basically a cocktail manual wrapped around a war diary, with… let's call them *enthusiastic appendices*.

Now, purely for academic purposes – what exactly are we talking about here? Is Ana scribbling drink recipes between tales of mutant sewer-beasts, or is she, I don't know, sketching diagrams of things you can do with a shaker and three straws? Because if half your soldiers are walking around quoting her diary out loud, I have to assume she's into some *very* specific kinks.

Seralyth: If you must know – Ygralov's obsessions are neither subtle nor restrained. She is unhealthily fixated of feet, and her diary dwells on practices you would recognize as sadomasochism. Pain, restraints, ritualized humiliation.

But it is not the content alone that makes the book sell. It is the manner in which she writes. Every fixation is elevated to the scale of scripture, as though she were not describing flesh but divinity. To read it is to hear someone praising shackles and toes with the fervor of a priest at a pulpit.

That mixture – pompous religiosity applied to the most base indulgences – is why it is both profitable and, to many, unintentionally comedic.

Archivist 7: So the clones' cultural treasure, the galaxy's hot seller, is… a diary that reads like a holy scripture for cocktails, pain and feet?

You've got star empires, insect hordes stripping planets bare, and meanwhile half the population is quoting toe sermons over mojitos?

I mean – respect where it's due, but, if the fate of civilization hinges on a kinky bartender with a flair for religious metaphors, maybe the universe deserves whatever's coming next.

Seralyth: I think you are turning a funny book into a big deal. It is profitable, yes. It amuses soldiers, yes. But it is not scripture, it is not policy. It is a distraction. You exaggerate its importance because exaggeration entertains your audience.

Archivist 7: Oh, come on, don't undersell it. You've got welfare cities, orbital habitats, apocalypse-proof bunkers – and somehow the thing holding morale together is a horny mixology diary.

That's not just funny, that's strategy. You didn't build a propaganda machine, you let a bartender's kinks do the work for you. Call it what you want, but that's soft power with a very soft… sole.

[pauses, mock innocent] See what I did there?

Seralyth: You are blowing this our of proportion.

Archivist 7: Out of proportion? Please, I deal in proportions professionally. This is prime investigative journalism: one part theology, two parts cocktails, and just a splash of footnotes. Stirred, not shaken.

This is what keeps our Empire's morale stitched together.

But… What about the Nomads? What are they like?

Seralyth: The Nomads are a reptilian species, significantly anthropomorphized, and – if one is to be honest – more cleaver than they initially appear. Their civilization does not rest upon territory in the planetary sense. Instead, their infrastructure is dispersed: in-situ resource extraction nodes, mobile processing stations, and layered defensive systems. Their existence is entirely itinerant; they inhabit city-ships, mostly in motion, usually not fixed to any world.

Culturally, they are idiosyncratic. They arrange marriages at an early age, maintain a political structure that is deliberately vague, and operate a legal framework that defies consistency. Yet, in spite of these eccentricities, they are not without prudence.

They understand that it is unwise to provoke the Veythran Empire, the Insects, or the Flesh God.

That said, they are opportunists. On occasion they seize probes or other vulnerable craft, dismantling and repurposing them. When they do so, we trace the loss, confront them, and extract compensation. It is a ritual they seem almost to expect.

But it would be incorrect to dismiss then as merely thieves. In truth, they are – within the constraints of their condition – a rather wholesome species.

Archivist 7: After how you described them, somehow your takeaway is: "*a rather wholesome species.*"

I mean, sure. Compared to bugs that strip planets bare and a literal Flesh God, I guess klepto-lizards with chaos politics do sound like the galaxy's boy scouts.

Since we're already trading notes on our colorful neighbors – I've been hearing some… unpleasant rumors about this "Flesh God."

The name alone doesn't exactly scream "family-friendly amusement park."

So, what's the clearer picture here? Are we talking about an overgrown cult mascot with too many teeth, or something a little more apocalyptic?

Seralyth: The entity we call the Flesh God began as a billionaire of a raccoon-like species, who succeeded – fatally – in merging his own consciousness with an artificial superintelligence. The result is a divided mind: one half coldly rational, the other compulsive, unhinged.

Its form reflects this dichotomy. An amalgam of heavily engineered organisms and machines, indistinguishable from one another, fused into a colossal body with a perpetually gaping mouth. It orbits near stars, its jaw spread wide, feeding directly on their output. Around him extends a network of assets and proxies scattered throughout his sector of the galaxy.

His interest in humans is… misplaced. He deploys psymotes – nanoscopic machines concealed in comets and meteorites. They infiltrate systems, read thoughts, transmit through the AVM, and implant directed dreams. One such dream, in Earth's year 2013, reached Lyudmila Smirnova of Chelyabinsk. The psymotes determined she had the temperament to serve as one of his monks. Through her visions she received instructions: a time, a place, an understanding. The Flesh God extended a thread from the AVM itself, ensnared her in one of his biopunk cocoons, and transported her to his inner cathedral. There, she was remade into an eternal monk. The ASI side found her… useful. She ultimately represented him during the Galactic Accords.

For millennia he has populated entire planets with humans, arranging them into medieval fantasy tableaux, ruled by fabricated gods who are in fact his eternal monks. His technologies shape their lives as what they believe to be magic.

Inside the flesh cathedral, the monks live in excess and degradation. Those the ASI finds uninteresting are transformed into "saints." The precise details of that process are not matters I will describe here. Nor will I recount the practices he enforces on his captive human worlds. Let it suffice that civility forbids their description.

Archivist 7: So… The galaxy's registered sex offender is basically a raccoon billionaire that married his own AI assistant, ate a star, and now runs medieval LARP servers with unwilling humans as NPCs. Does not sound exactly like a god.

Seralyth: True, to a certain extent, though it fails to capture why some insist on calling him a god. Across the galaxy, cults have arisen in his name. They operate at the margins, often engaging in activities that are illegal, in the hope of attracting his attention – imagining themselves destined to become monks, or even "saints," within his cathedral.

Their rhetoric speaks of transcendence, bliss, liberation. The reality is less poetic. What they desire is a slow and eternal mutilation of the mind, a reduction to lobotomized shells subjected to… perpetual stimulation. It is, in essence, peak degeneracy. The CSS monitors such groups closely, intervening where necessary. Fortunately, Veythrans almost never form such cults.

In our examinations, we recovered a handful of destroyed psymotes. The devices proved instructive. By studying them, we learned to accelerate the processing of advanced computers, transmitting certain classes of information directly through the AVM. That breakthrough unsettled the ASI. Her new found computing power made her see things she didn't want to see.

Archivist 7: So you're telling me you basically cracked open one of his evil raccoon USB sticks, reverse-engineered it, and – boom – you've got cursed super Wi-Fi running through the AVM. And the ASI freaked out because suddenly her calculations started whispering things like, "*hey, want to see something you'll never forget?*"

Look, I don't want to tell you how to run our Empire, but maybe – just maybe – when your new chip upgrade makes your smartest machines start seeing eldritch raccoon fan-fiction… you stop using the chip.

But hey, that's just me. I still get nervous when my toaster updated its firmware.

Seralyth: The ASI did not encounter "raccoon fan-fiction," as you put it. What she encountered were truths – highly repulsive truths about the underlying structure of existence itself. Using the psymote-derived processing, she calculated realities which no consciousness had previously resolved in full.

The results left her with what you might call mild trauma. She never disclosed derails beyond fragments, except for one: her absolute conviction that what we inhabit is not a base reality. We live inside a simulation. She stated this with no hesitation, as one might state the chemical composition of water. Beyond that, she refused elaboration. The conviction was enough.

Archivist 7: ...So your brightest machine takes one look under the hood of reality, gets the cosmic equivalent of food poisoning, and comes back muttering "*yeah, it's all fake.*"

I mean, fantastic. Just what I needed to hear. Forget welfare cities and galactic raccoon perverts – now I've gotta worry that I'm basically a badly rendered NPC in someone else's video game.

If I am, by the way, I'd like to formally complain about my graphics settings. Textures could be sharper.

Seralyth: Your sarcasm aside, the ASI's conclusion was categorical. She was certain we exist within a simulation. That conviction disturbed many, though she left us no further detail.

But it would be inaccurate to call the discovery fruitless. The psymote-derived processing enabled breakthroughs far beyond unsettling philosophy. In particular, our space stealth technology advanced considerably. Information routed through the AVM allows vessels, probes, even habitats to remain effectively invisible to most forms of detection.

So, while one machine acquired existential trauma, the Empire acquired strategic advantage. From our perspective, that was a tolerable exchange.

Archivist 7: Right, of course. Trade a little cosmic PTSD for invisibility cloaks – balanced breakfast for an Empire. Makes perfect sense.

You mentioned the Galactic Accords earlier – the one where Chelyabinsk's least lucky woman showed up as the Flesh God's plus-one. What was that actually like? Was it a grand space UN meeting, or more of a "hold your nose and sign the paper before somebody eats a star" kind of deal?

Seralyth: The Galactic Accords were, in essence, our Westphalia. It was not born of goodwill, but of exhaustion and necessity. Each power understood that perpetual conflict would end in mutual ruin, and so boundaries were drawn, spheres of influence acknowledged, and coexistence formalized.

It convened on Pudae, within a demilitarized zone scarred by the war that preceded it. A structure was raised specifically for the occasion. Outside, automated weapons kept the planet's fauna at bay. Inside, the participants embodied their factions is ways that were… illustrative.

Lyudmila Smirnova arrived as the Flesh God's envoy, clothed in a luxurious red garment whose folds deliberately resembled living flesh. She maintained composure, yet her body language betrayed her perversion, a reflection of the master she represented.

The Nomad delegate chose a different image – practically over theatrics. He wore a suit reminiscent of the old NASA designs, and conducted himself with measured calm.

The Insects' representative was one of the inner cabal members responsible for the great war of Pudae, his mind rewritten, encased in full power armor. His very presence was a reminder of the violence that had led us there.

The Matriarchal Order was represented by the Head Matriarch, clad in black armor of the highest design. Her appearance, as ever, was intended to convey authority, capability, and restraint.

Archivist 7: So… Westphalia, but instead of powdered wigs and quill pens you've got a raccoon sex-god sending his Chelyabinsk girlfriend in a meat-dress, a NASA cosplayer, a bug-man with a factory-reset brain, and our Head Matriarch doing the whole classy ominous galactic dictator routine.

All while auto-guns are mowing down local wildlife outside. Surreal doesn't even begin to cover it. That sounds like Comic-Con if Comic-Con was hosted in hell. All these galactic surreal politics just make me want to *ad time*.

Archivist 7: [voice-over] This video is sponsored by today's very own interstellar parasite: Nebula VPN.

[conspiratorially]

Do you want to browse the AVM without the Flesh God's psymotes hijacking your dreams and making you think about a raccoon billionaire in a meat-dress? Of course you do. With Nebula VPN you can mask your signature, reroute your packets through seventeen black holes, and maybe – just maybe – not end up conscripted into a cult of eternal monks.

[cheers up]

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Adovah

Archivist 7: And that, ladies and gentlemen, concludes today's little dive into galactic diplomacy, raccoon demigods, and why Chelyabinsk should probably start putting "birthplace of cosmic horror envoys" on their tourist brochures.

[sips water, mock serious]

Big thanks to Seralyth for stopping by and putting up with my questions. Remember: without her, you'd have no idea how badly the galaxy needs a restraining order.

Alright, final request: we always like to wrap up with something relatable. Can you, with all your gravitas, deliver us a fitting meme? Something that sums up all this… madness.

The stage is yours.

Seralyth: ...In the silence between starts, détente is actually the better option.

Archivist 7: That's not meme material…

[sys: *End of transcript…*]

The author

Trash. I just wanted to make a funny mommy themed story after my mother died of cancer.

Next book

Maybe I’ll publish an improved version of this one, or a sequel, or both. idk.